



# SPARKS JOURNAL

★ ★ ★ ★ SOCIETY OF WIRELESS PIONEERS INC ★ ★ ★ ★

## LEGENDS OF THE WIRELESS PIONEERS

*Adventure & Experiences of Professional Brass Pounders Around the World*



**RECORDING THE EARLY HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT OF THE WIRELESS**

VOLUME 6, NO.3 [APRIL 1984]

- QUARTERLY -

TALES OF THE WIRELESS PIONEERS

## HOW A NEW IDEA—"WIRELESS" . . . Saved Many Lives and Served the Public

### WIRELESS TO THE RESCUE.

A FEW REMARKS ON A "ROLL OF HONOUR" (COMPILED BY THE MARCONI WIRELESS TELEGRAPH COMPANY OF AMERICA) RECOUNTING A NUMBER OF ACHIEVEMENTS OF RADIO-TELEGRAPHY AT SEA.

By H. J. B. WARD, B.A.

IF wireless telegraphy had nothing else to put to its credit, the list of "timely rescues" recorded in the following pages would far more than justify any feelings of pride which might animate its inventor and pioneers. Inasmuch as tables and lists make a somewhat cold appeal to the generality of readers, it may not be out of place to prefix them with a few remarks which may serve to indicate the wonderfully dramatic human interest possessed by our schedule.

It will be noticed, in the first place, that our data deal with merchant shipping alone, and in its initial stages the growth of wireless telegraphy in the mercantile marine was necessarily slow. When the first vessel was equipped, its communication was limited to the one coast station at that time established, so that the immediate value of the invention failed to "strike home" upon the less imaginative and observant. Slowly but surely, however, the new means of communication continued to adduce proof after proof of its value; and in our list we see striking examples of the value of wireless, occurring with greater and greater frequency as the number of vessels equipped and coast stations established have been progressively increased.

It is frequently said that Englishmen are innately conservative and slow to move; but the same remark might not unfairly be applied to the human race in general. "Whatever is, is right," an excellent apothegm in its way, has been too often taken to imply that what does *not* already exist is probably wrong! It was not until wireless telegraphy had for nearly eighteen years been demonstrating its priceless utility for seagoing vessels that the British Government issued, on the 20th of July, 1916, an Order in Council insisting upon the provision of a wireless installation in the case of "every British ship



### AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

of 3,000 tons gross tonnage or upwards." Now that this step has been taken by the greatest maritime power in the world, other nations are rapidly following suit; a similar regulation has been issued by the French and Italian Governments; and, doubtless, will be made universal as soon as the present struggle is over.

By way of exemplification of the above remarks, we would point out that the rescue of the crew of the s.s. *R. F. Matthews* in 1899 is

*Geometrical,  
not  
Arithmetical,  
Progression.*

followed by a gap of two years, so that our record does not become continuous until we reach the year 1907. The entries to the credit of wireless telegraphy necessarily increase in frequency far more than proportionately to the number of commercial vessels equipped; in mathematical language, the rate of development proceeds rather by "geometrical" than "arithmetical" progression. The advantages derived from the installation of radio apparatus on mercantile shipping cover a wide range. They include the offering to owners of chance of maintaining constant touch with their ocean-going property throughout the voyage, a procedure which involves consequent opportunities for changing the route or destination of the vessels in accordance with the advantages which may accrue to them from such change, and which involves also the certain gain of knowing exactly at what date and almost at what hour they are likely to reach their destination. This latter advantage leads to the natural result that preparations for immediate handling of passengers and cargo may be effected in advance, a course entailing an infinite amount of economy in time and expense.

Again, any passengers who may be carried, are able to maintain their personal and business relations with friends and clients at both ends almost throughout the whole voyage, and the ever-increasing amount of "traffic" handled by wireless operators bears eloquent testimony to the recognition of these facilities by ocean-voyagers. Our present list, however, deals only with the still more important subject of Safety at Sea, a matter which, from the very start of wireless activities, received preferential attention, which formed the subject of special codification in the Berlin Conference of 1910; and which in the current International Rules, as laid down by the London Conference of the 20th January, 1914, takes precedence with regard to its calls over all other messages. We may remind our readers that under the provision of this latter Act, binding upon all the signatories thereto (and these include practically all the civilised Powers of the world), any captain receiving a wireless appeal for help is bound to take immediate steps, not only to pass on such an appeal to others, but to answer it himself, or—in default thereof—to be prepared to give the most substantial and convincing reasons for omitting to do so. It is only fair to merchant skippers to say that throughout the history of wireless they have shown the greatest zeal in the fulfilment of such duties.

If readers will allow their imagination to dwell upon some of the instances in our tabulated records (such as the case of the freight steamer *Columbian*, whose occupants were saved from fire on May the 3rd, 1914) wherein is noted the fact that the rescue has been effected through the passing of wireless messages from ship to ship, they will realise what is signified by the term a "Wireless Net." A dramatic instance, more recent than any of those included in our list, may serve to illustrate what actually happens. The *Pio Nono*, a vessel of 6,500 tons en route from New Orleans to Barcelona, encountered a series of severe storms culminating in an hurricane with heavy cross seas. After having been for some time subjected to this severe buffeting, she became waterlogged to such an extent that it was thought best to abandon her. Four boats were successfully launched and the officers and crew, numbering between 60 and 70, were split up between them. The little craft endeavoured to keep together, but the heavy sea rendered their efforts unavailable. One of them containing the ship's doctor was, fortunately for the occupants, picked up by a steamer before they had been many hours adrift. As soon as the captain of the rescuing vessel learnt that there were three other boatloads still in peril, he set to work to search for them; but meeting with no success, started radiating wireless messages calling upon those who received them to aid in the search. The disaster occurred on one of the main



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**Early Days of The Wireless**



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**EXERCISE CALORIE CHART FOR WIRELESS-MEN**

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# SOCIETY OF WIRELESS PIONEERS INC

Our Wavelength — Preserving Communications History

THE FOUNDER'S PAGE

## "On The Road to Mandalay"



INDIA-1919



JAIN TEMPLE  
CALCUTTA

Top picture Ye Ed Center, Operator Vernon Goldsmith - Right and Freight Clerk McLean Left aboard SS Santa Cruze [WBD] Christmas 1919 at Calcutta, India. Bottom: One of most ornate temples in the world ... Jain. Genuine Ruby about 2 inches across in forehead of the Buddaha in background temple. All ornate beyond description.

## The Society of Wireless Pioneers Founded



PIONEER SHIP wireless operators from all sections of the Pacific Coast met recently at the Green Mill Inn for the organizational meeting of the American Society of Wireless Pioneers of the Seven Seas, Inc. At center, above, is William Breniman, of Santa Rosa, organizational chairman of the new association.

May 4 1968

THEY LIKED THE IDEA—STILL DO !

**"SWEET SIXTEEN"** That is how old your Society will be on May 4th 1984. The above pictures your founder, flanked on the right by Cmdr. Richard "Dick" Johnstone - our First President, and on the far left by Bill Vetter, then Frank Geisel. Except for Bill Vetter your Presidents were in that order, ie: RJ #1; FG #2 and WAB No.3. You may be somewhat amused with the Society's first name. It was changed 2 months later as foreign members started joining the Society. Some fifty men attended this first 'organizational' meeting, most were from the S.F. Bay area but some from the Pacific Northwest and Southern California. Bill Vetter at far left was our "Senior" member who started his sea-going career in 1908 on Barge 91. Later Bill become quite renown as an Engraving Specialist. Dick Johnstone's "FS" was in 1912 on the SS Acapulco. He established the Society's Amateur Networks and was in the front line of Society Champions. The 'fist' of "FG" [Frank Geisel] was known to operators over most of the world as his famous 'sine' went out over the air from Station KPH for nearly 40 years. Regretfully, Frank's health has deteriorated in the past few weeks and he is now in a convalescent home. Friend's of Frank may wish to send a card or letter c/o his wife Mary: QTH is 2816 Tice Creek Dr. #6, Walnut Creek, CA 94595.

We feel that our 'non-profit' organization has made a good 'beach-head' on recording the early history of the results of ideas and experiments made by Heinrich Rudolph Hertz, James Clerk Maxwell, Oliver Lodge, Kennelly, Fessenden, Marconi, deForest and others in this field of transmissions via electro-magnetic waves.

We have received thousands of laudatory letters - such as the one at the left from the Editor of one of the Rocky Mountain's leading newspapers. Your Editor has received three important awards during the past few years which include one from the "DeForest Pioneers, Inc." for ...authoring many books on Radio Communications; The "Houck Award" sponsored by the Antique Wireless Association [ For outstanding preservation of early radio history in publications of the Society of Wireless Pioneer. The latter included a monetary honorarium [returned to SOWP and AWA] and a more recent award of election to "Fellowship". This is certainly the oldest and perhaps one of the most prestigious organizations in the United States, ie: The Radio Club of America which was founded in 1909 and celebrated their Diamond Anniversary in November 1983.

Your editor, in accepting the above honors, feels that the Society should share equal recognition as it is only through our publications that we were able to achieve these honors.

Since that day, 16 years ago May 4th 1968, we have published over FOUR THOUSAND pages of historical data, most of it recording the early history of communications. We are quite proud of our accomplishments and the fact that over five thousand members have joined our non-profit organization, making it the largest of its kind in the world. We hope our publications will continue to reflect the Hallmark of quality and substance for the edification of future generations.

William A. Breniman



## APPRECIATION AND RECOGNITION BY THE MEDIA



Edward Lehman  
Editor and Publisher

March 12, 1984

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William A. Breniman  
Society of Wireless Pioneers  
P. O. Box 530  
Santa Rosa, CAL 95402

Dear Mr. Breniman,

You were just wonderful to send me the very interesting copies of the Sparks Journal. Not only is the content rich and very well done, but the layout and printing are exceptional.

I took some of the copies to Canon City where we also publish a daily. Our editor/general manager also does lots of commercial printing for other publications. He was so interested that he insisted upon keeping them.

You are preserving and enriching irreplaceable history of our early communications.

I found your publications about the ships of yesterday and the marvelous men in the radio shacks also was most fascinating. About in 1934, my family took me on a trip from Havana through the Panama Canal and up to San Francisco. We were aboard the Dollar Lines/President Harrison.

I always wondered what happened to the President Harrison because I traveled all over the ship and even got to take the help in the Canal crossing. I always knew it had been lost in World War II, but only in reading your publication did I learn. First, it was captured by the Japanese and subsequently sunk by a U.S. sub. It was very interesting.

As a 9-year-old endowed with perpetual motion and curiosity, I spent lots of time in the engine room and on the bridge. However, the radio operators let me look in, but were both busy and not inclined to welcome guests.

By the way, Havana was great because they were having a revolution and I thought the bombs and shooting were top-notch Fourth of July. That was the revolution when Batista took over. To protect us as American tourists, for several days we were assigned two policemen all of our own.

History is fascinating. We work with it all the time, but we do dish it up in a hurry.

You are a remarkable person and I am glad you keep the dynamo whirling at a remarkable pace. You are fascinated with life and events and fortunately you are sharing them with generations of today and in the tomorrow ahead.

Thank you again for sharing these editions with me.

With best regards,

# Tales of the WIRELESS PIONEERS

True Experiences and Adventures of Commercial "Brass Pounders"



Society of Wireless Pioneers, Inc.



## Marine Radio of Today

By - C. H. Hess 688-P

REPRINTED FROM QST NOV. 1929

The commercial operator, through the medium of QST, is able to keep up with the newest developments in amateur radio but, on the other hand, the amateur knows very little about the commercial end. By "commercial radio" let it be explained that "marine radio" is meant, the branch upon which the writer can speak from several years' experience.

In the minds of many operators in the amateur field, the spark transmitter is generally considered as one of the relics of the dark age, ranking with the coherer and kindred pieces of apparatus in antiquity. However, a good 50% of the ships sailing the seven seas are still spark equipped and although the numbers are gradually dwindling, it is safe to assume that a goodly proportion will be in operation until the spark really does pass into history in 1940.

This is not as bad as it sounds, for a "500-cycle" spark transmitter in the hands of a skilled operator is capable of some very pretty work. The rub comes in the fact that sometimes the operator is not successful in finding the right "combination" and the note goes flop, greatly broadening the wave and reducing the range. It is, however, not unusual for a good spark to work 2000 miles in good radio weather, in the wee sma' hours, when local interference lets up.

Marine radio is not primarily concerned with DX work. It is an advantage for a ship to work DX, but not a necessity, for marine radio is primarily for use in case of emergency. In such instances, help summoned from a distance of 2000 miles would be worthless. Except in the case of the large passenger vessels, traffic to and from the cargo ships, which form the bulk of ocean tonnage, is limited to docking messages, notifying the agents of arrival, supplies required and other details.

Many spark transmitters have been converted for A.C.C. W. transmission, with wonderful success. It is through these modernized sets that the bulk of the traffic to and from coast stations is handled, the coast stations preferring to give their traffic for spark equipped vessels to tube equipped ships for relay, and spark stations finding it easier to clear their traffic through the same routing. One often hears an ambitious operator with a tube set work all day "gathering in" traffic and TRs and then shooting the whole bunch on through to the nearest coast station after dark, receiving, in return, traffic for the ships whom he is QSO, then turning around to deliver the same. Some very neat work is done in this manner and one hears many exceptionally good "fists" at work.

Relaying plays a very important part in marine radio. It has been developed until it has become very much of a fine art. Considering the bulk of traffic handled, there are very few mistakes, even though such traffic might pass through a dozen hands. For each message delivered, the station doing the relaying notifies the station of origin of its delivery with a service message.

Many large steamship companies have established nightly schedules between their ships, and have been assigned a general call. Much good work is done on these schedules. Position reports are exchanged and passed along to the ship nearest a coastal station.

## ALWAYS ON THE JOB



## GREETINGS AGAIN, VETERANS

REMEMBER THE "GOOD OLD DAYS"?

- When you were *always* on watch, for fear of missing that other wireless-equipped ship?
- When you woke up the passengers in three codes, Navy, American Morse and Continental?
- When you searched through the wavelengths for the other fellow's signal?

This may seem "small pickin's" to the amateur who is accustomed to easy international contact, but conditions are very different on ship waves, especially in the matter of QRM. It takes quite a bit of concentration, not to say skill, to copy a ship even 1000 miles away on 750 meters, with another vessel, right abeam, booming forth with a spark set on 600 meters. Spark sets usually employ, in addition to the 600-meter calling wave, 660, 706, and 800 meters. Tube sets use 640 or 660, 706, 750 and 800 meters. The 800-meter wave is, of course, for radio compass work only.

Passenger ships, having a lot of "paid" or personal traffic, transmit on the higher waves of from 1800 to 2400 meters, leaving the 600- and 700-meter bands free for ships not so equipped. Many of the foreign passenger ships, while still keeping their spark sets on 500 meters, are fitted out with a modern tube or arc sets for long wave work. In the marine field the arc has proven itself very efficient on the high waves but is not much good on 600, due to the mush accompanying the chopper modulation. Quite a few of the Shipping Board freighters are equipped with spark on low waves and arc for high waves. This is generally considered to be a good combination.

All of the coast stations are now tube equipped. No traffic is transmitted on 600 meters, the coast stations shifting to a higher wave after communication has been established. This is an innovation of the past few years and has done much to alleviate the terrific QRM racket on 600.

Recently, a few of the larger ships have been equipped with short wave transmitters for use during the static season; that bugbear of marine radio. Ships with short wave transmitters usually act as clearing houses for traffic, and take a great load off the coast stations. One can readily see that it is much easier to maintain contact with only one ship on S.W. schedule than to sweat over sketchy QSO's with many ships on 600 meters.

The Scandinavian countries have been in the vanguard of short wave marine radio development, as many amateurs already know. A fellow with a tube set on 600 meters may smile superciliously at the low rolling note

(Continued Next Page)



of a Norwegian spark, but when it comes to real DX, said Norwegian has it all over the other chap, by reason of his short wave rig.

The spark transmitter most frequently found on American ships are, first, the Navy Standard which is, perhaps, the best spark transmitter ever built, but after being operated by and being operated upon by many operators in its 10 years or so of life, is sometimes found a little the worse for wear. A Navy Standard spark, in good condition, can give one of the best notes heard in the game. It is found in the 2-kw., 1-kw. and  $\frac{1}{2}$ -kw. sizes. Sometimes on extremely small craft, such as sea-going tugs, etc., the  $\frac{1}{4}$ -kw. set is encountered. The P4-P8 and P5 type sparks of the Marconi Company or R.C.A. are still found on many ships and rendering efficient service. Cutting and Washington, Kilbourne & Clark and sets by other manufacturers are found to a lesser extent.

The A.C.C.W. set most commonly found is the converted 2-kw. P4-P8 spark, now known as the ET-3628. The P5,  $\frac{1}{2}$ -kw. spark, has also been converted in many instances. New installations are either the ET-3627, 200-watt, C.W.-I.C.W., a 500-watt transmitter with both long and intermediate waves available.

The Navy Standard receivers, which were part of the regular installation on Shipping Board vessels during the war days, have proven themselves excellent when adapted with tube detector and amplifier units. Still, it was not long ago when crystal detectors ruled supreme and if an operator wanted to use a tube detector he had to bring along his own. Nowadays, all ships are equipped with tube receivers. The latest receiver, part of all new installations today, is a modification of the Navy Standard receiver and is about the best in the field.

Oftentimes new operators, fresh from the schools or from the ranks of the amateur, are greatly disappointed after a trip on some third-class tramp. As in every other field, the best jobs go to the more experienced workmen and unless the new man just happens to fall into a good job from the start, he is often assigned to some tub that the old timers pass by with a sniff. However, the Radiomarine Corporation makes it a policy to assign the new man as a junior on a passenger ship for a few months, if practical, for the breaking-in period.

Commercial operators are of various degrees of efficiency but the standard, as a whole is exceedingly good. As in the amateur game, the proficiency of the operator is in direct proportion to the interest he takes in the work.

As most commercial operators are ex-amateurs, they have a keen appreciation of the amateur and his accomplishments, and take pride that it was in the ranks of the "ham" that the bug first bit them.

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#### Editors Note:

This is a 'flash-back' to November 1929 when our good member Charlie Hess - 688-P furnished this story to "QST" and they published it in their November issue. Charlie left the marine field in 1939 and became one of the top Chief Operators for the CAA (Now FAA). After retirement from the FAA in 1965 he returned to the TRT Station WAX where he held down a very heavy volume job until second retirement in 1971. Older members may recall Charlie's story, run some years back, of the Socony Tanker aground in the North China sea in 1936 with a load of aviation gas leaking over the ship. The Story of the Tanker Magnolia was a saga that will be well remembered in marine history.

We thank member Fred A. Linn W9NZF (3860-P) who ran across this story (some 45 years since printed) as he was researching early issues of QST's looking for old tube data especially (FET's with lights) Fred's interest was submarines in Uncle Sam's Navy. He did not serve on one but was in the Armored Force with the Signal Corps during the "bigone".

## Dog Saves 16 Desperate Seamen

Story begins on the Standard Oil tanker China Arrow KDGW in 1925 while the writer was serving on her as Sparks.

The first assistant engineer, Mr. Buckley had bought in Shanghai a small Chinese chow dog and named him Ming.

On the voyage home and while the skipper "The Admiral" was making his daily inspections, Ming decided to try the captain's leg and proceeded to drench him quite thoroughly. A half dozen of us fellowmen were watching the proceedings and just about froze as we all knew the Admiral was hell for discipline and could chew one out with no provocation. We were sure he would blow his top and perhaps pick up Ming and throw him overboard with the 1st assistant. But lo and behold, he only petted the dog, congratulating Buck on having such a fine dog. He said that was a good luck sign and I do believe the incident mellowed the skipper somewhat as things were better on the ship after that.

Buckley transferred from the China Arrow to a Chief's job on the tanker CHUKY. Later in '25 or '26, the CHUKY was fighting a typhoon, 800 miles east of Japan when the ship broke in two. The forward section with deck officers and radio man sank at once without getting off a distress call. The radio operator, Les Hornstra, was a good friend of mine and had served on the INDIA ARROW. The stern section remained afloat long enough to get a boat off with 16 men. These boys floated around the Pacific for almost three weeks. No navigators or navigational equipment aboard, all they could do was head west and expect to reach Asia but it wasn't easy against the westerly winds. With a navigator, they may have been able to navigate to Hawaii or Midway. They were not sighted and they did not sight any ships. Their condition was very serious.

Then one night, the little dog Ming started barking with great fury and pointing his nose to the north. The boys rowed like hell in the direction Ming was pointing and in two hours came upon a small Japanese fishing vessel which rescued them. The little dog's nose could smell those fishermen a long ways off.

Later, Buck told me he wouldn't take a million dollars for that dog and could you blame him?

Re the CHUKY. Believe it was a former Norwegian registered tanker and I think it was now sailing for Shell Oil. It was one of six tankers built for the Baltic Sea trade. Two of her sister ships were lost at sea sudden like the CHUKY. They disappeared without a trace. Finally another one had similar accident but they were able to save her and determine where the weakness was in their construction, and corrective measures were taken but only after 3 ships were lost with many men.

--Earl Korf 615-P

===== 30 =====



"COULD I HAVE HIM CALL YOU BACK?  
THE ENGINE ROOM IS FLOODED, HIS  
PARRIOT ESCAPE, THE CREWS IS SEA-  
SICK, AND HE'S ABOUT TO LOSE HIS COOL."

===== 30 =====



**E** PISODES

&

**E**

EXPERIENCES

## Rustbucket Herald

### The Conestoga "NAGP" Story

Two famous or infamous Naval mysteries are the disappearances without trace of the Collier Cyclops (Ex Jupiter) and sea going tug Conestoga. The Conestoga was getting ready at Mare Island to tow a barge to Samoa, via Honolulu. This was in 1920 while I was working at Mare Island. I was crazy to go to sea and learn radio so I spent much of my time chatting with the Navy radio operator on the Conestoga. I had it all arranged. Was going to join the Navy and get assigned to the Conestoga for this trip. As I was not yet 18, my parents' consent was necessary. Unfortunately, or fortunately as it later turned out, my parents decided that one son was enough on the water and turned me down. I was at the time disappointed but another assistant operator was obtained and the Conestoga took off for Hawaii with its tow and went down without a trace. Seems like a lot of our disappointments are blessings in disguise.

—Earl Korf 613-P

### Boomeranging Fake & Mux Fun

As I just joined SOWP a couple of months ago, I received the latest issue of the Journal and want to say the tales in it are terrific. Enjoyed it immensely and that picture of the MAURETANIA was superb. The call letters stopped me for a moment (I didn't remember those), but I woke up.

The last time I worked ships was when I was at the arc station WSH, Independent Wireless at East Meriches, L.I. There was a MAURETANIA but an older one, along with the AQUITANIA and the LUSITANIA. I left radio in 1930 which was before the ship in the picture was built.

In response to the request for anecdotes, etc. I can give you the story of how we faked a radiogram and sent it to the op on the WSC wire from inside the office of Radio Central New York, and how it boomeranged. The message was as follows:

WSC147 RADIO SS NEVERSEILLE 42 ETC

DUMMENDUMMER  
255 WEST 275TH ST  
BROOKLYN N Y

IF I DONT ARRIVE PLEASE MEET ME

I M DUMM

Or how, when in charge of the Marine Info Bureau at Broad Street, NYC, in taking TRs from WSC, Tuckerton N J, I unknowingly took control away from the auto-transmitter downstairs, and started sending Vs, calling Berlin and signing WSO (the wire was open to me), until an engineer dashed into the room saying "CUT IT OUT!" He had a note from Berlin in his hand saying "MR, WE ARE WSO ON WGG'S WAVELENGTH."

Or how I, unknowingly, put every telegraph wire, including the railroad ones on Long Island, out.

Many more.

73s, or as my friend George Best (ex-NBD RC) in Ft. Lauderdale puts it: 43s. He says that due to inflation it is now 43s.

— Dave Higginbotham, Inventor  
Highbrook Road  
Bar Harbor, ME 04609

## THE E. I. STORE OF THE 80'S

Time goes so fast for us that it's hard to keep track. Still building and selling small sets. Most radio mags have gone over to computers - and whoinell is interested in them?

Been in it 59 years now - and still working seven days a week. Mabel and I are always behind in orders. We have many SOWP members as customers.

Found it is worse being the only ones in this line of stuff than to be in a biz with little coming in.

We give lots of advice to older people: "KEEP OUT OF THE ROCKING CHAIR - IT WILL KILL YOU!"

May 17th we're paying our way to Oahu again - our twelfth trip. We love it.

Bestus 73 from Mabel and me.

—E.G.Osterhoudt 203-SGP

P.S. Last issue is a WOW! . . . I used to visit Dickow and buy parts from him when he published "RADIO"

## SOS-CQD RECORD

I was supervisor of the radio watch on board the USS SARATOGA, CV-3, on February 21, 1945, when we were off the coast of Iwo Jima. GQ was sounded and we were under air attack by Japanese suicide fighter planes. We received five direct hits on the first wave of planes. The flight deck was burning very badly; at this time we went out SOS before the second wave of planes attacked. The damage and casualties were heavy, but the old lady SARA managed to stay afloat, thank God. By the best of my memory we had about twelve direct hits from the suicide fighters ("kamikazes") and a torpedo. The other carrier in our escort was sunk.

I was at the tender age of 20: it was pure hell....

USS SARATOGA 1945 - Lee Cloar 3863-V

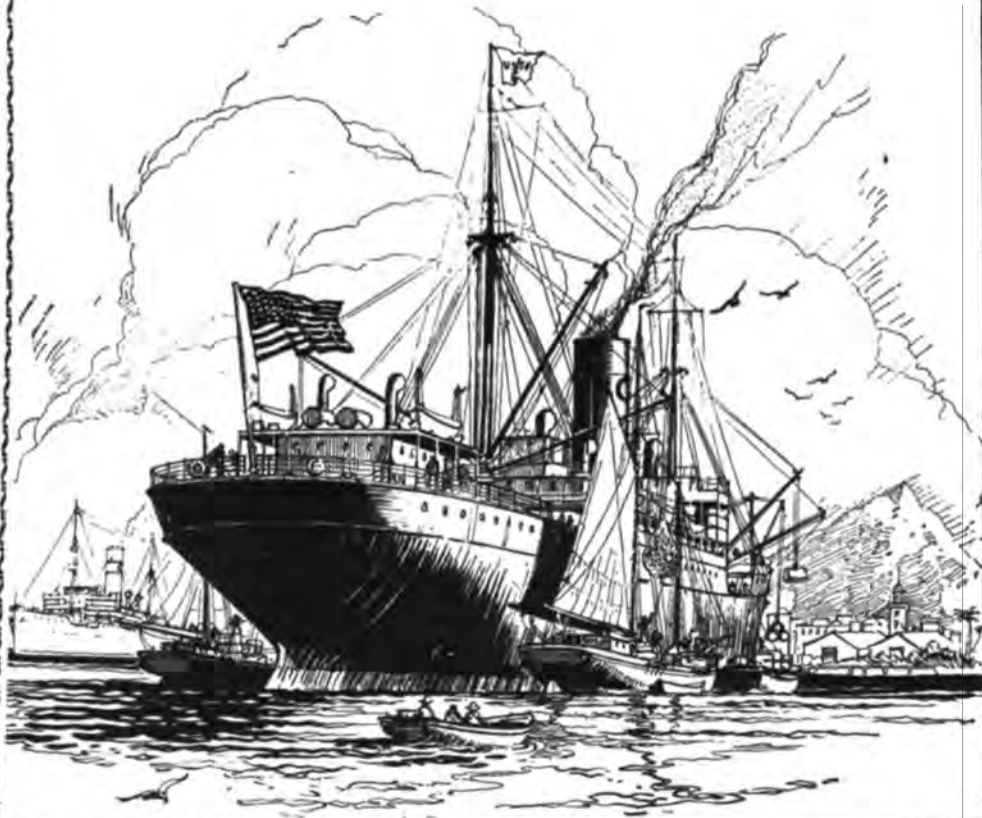
### "YES... WE HAVE NO BANANAS TODAY !"

I enjoyed the articles on the "Great White Fleet" because when I was in school (that's a long time ago) the ships, known as the "Banana Boats" used to come into Saint John, New Brunswick.

How times change! I remember some of their cargo would be ripe when they docked and these would be sold on the wharf for 50¢ a stalk. Just imagine how many people would be there to buy them at that price today!

73

—Fred Rafferty 3537-V  
287 Quispamsis Road  
Quispamsis, N.B. Canada  
EOG 2W0





# Book Reviews

SALTWATER BOOKSHELF



## "A Careless Word . . . A Needless Sinking"

Capt. Arthur R. Moore

Published by the American Merchant Marine Museum,  
at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Kings Point, NY.

NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME UNDER ONE COVER  
— TOLD IN DETAIL —

The tremendous losses in ships and personnel suffered by the U. S. Merchant Marine during World War II.

This book is the first documented account under one cover of the catastrophic losses suffered by the American flag Merchant Fleet, both in ships and personnel, during World War II.

The losses began on November 8, 1940, when the freighter MV CITY OF RAYVILLE struck a German mine off the south coast of Australia and ended on August 14, 1945 when Japan surrendered. Even after hostilities ceased, American ships were sinking after striking drifting mines.

After the first German U-Boats arrived off the Eastern seaboard of America in January of 1942, the slaughter began. Unarmed tankers and freighters sailing alone were torpedoed and shelled relentlessly often within sight of shore and there was heavy loss of life. The U-Boats ranged up and down the coast at will until the U.S. Navy organized a convoy system and patrol planes and blimps came on the scene to patrol the coastwise sea-lanes.

But the battle raged on all over the world's oceans. American merchant ships were ordered to sail alone to the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean. They went via the Panama Canal, the west coast of South America, and Straits of Magellan. Others were convoyed as far as Trinidad and then sent across the South Atlantic alone. Hundreds of ships crossed the Pacific alone, headed for the Pacific islands under Allied control, Australia, or even on to India. A few were spotted and sunk by Japanese subs but fortunately for the United States most of the Japanese subs were occupied with other duties otherwise the losses would have been much heavier in this area.

This book accounts for 757 ships and over 6,000 merchant seamen who lost their lives. Over 450 photos of the ships involved are included.

As you read this history, you will find it hard to believe that such a thing ever happened. The war at sea will never again be fought in this fashion.

Captain Moore, born and raised on the banks of the Kennebec River in Maine, has made his home in Hallowell all his life. His love for ships goes back to the time he was old enough to recognize the tug SEGUIN towing Philadelphia & Reading coal barges to a coal dock in Hallowell. He was really hooked when his grandfather took him aboard the coastwise tanker NEW YORK SOCONY docked at the Socony (Mobil) bulk plant in Hallowell.

He graduated from the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, New York in February 1944 and sailed as Cadet, 3rd Mate, 2nd Mate during World War II on the SS DELAIRES, SS WILLIAM C.C. CLAIBORNE, SS CITY OF OMAHA, SS ALFRED MOORE, SS KANSAN, and SS CALEB STRONG.

In 1948, at the age of 24, he obtained a Master of Oceans license and to that license has added 43 unlimited pilotage endorsements for harbors and rivers between Maine and Virginia.

Captain Moore operated his own piloting business on the Kennebec River in 1954-55. At the end of the navigation season in December 1955, he accepted a position as Chief Mate on the MV ESSO THAMES in the Inland Waterways Department of Esso Standard Oil (Exxon Co. U.S.A.). After less than two years as Chief Mate he was promoted to Master and retired in that capacity in 1980 after 24½ years with the company. For the last 16 years, he was Master and Pilot of the MV EXXON MARYLAND, a 600 foot integrated push tow.

He is now a Pollution and Safety Control Representative for A. Johnson & Co. of New York and Exxon Shipping Company and also works as a part-time Relief Captain for the Maine State Ferry Service. He is married and the father of 4 children.

### FOREWORD

Since the Civil War, the American Merchant Marine has been a much neglected American industry, attacked by many different pressure groups and appreciated only during periods of war. Its decline has endangered the nation since the end of World War II. Today, except for oil tankers, coastwise shipping is virtually dead and our deep-sea maritime fleet is at a low point. The need to awaken interest in American ships, American seamen, and our overall American Merchant Marine has never been greater.

By highlighting the great risks run by the merchant marine in the Second World War, Captain Moore's fine new work can do much to show thought to leaders throughout the country that shipping is indeed our fourth arm of defense. The staggering losses in ships and men must be memorialized and this new book can help in this process. We hope that it will reach a wide audience. We hope that its lessons will be understood.

The American Merchant Marine Museum is proud to stand as Publisher of this important work. Our museum hopes to reach out beyond four walls on the banks of Long Island Sound and tell the story of the importance of ships to America. Our new National Maritime Hall of Fame is one way we can help. To stimulate the writing of books like this one is another way. Ships made America and ships, American merchant ships, are vital to keep our nation strong.

Frank O. Braynard  
November 23, 1982



Tanker SS BYRON D. BENSON

### Editorial Comment

#### "A CARELESS WORLD . . . A NEEDLESS SINKING"

Granite Hill Copr., RFD #1, Box 210, Hallowell, Maine 04347 First Edition published 1983. New Revised Edition 500 copies ready Mar. 15 1984. Price \$55.00 per copy plus \$2.25 postage in the U.S.; \$3.50 Foreign.

Ever now and then a new book comes along that is out of the ordinary. This is one of them. It is a "Labor of Love and Dedication" on the part of Captain Arthur R. Moore, its author.

It has taken Captain many years to collect and compile what is perhaps the most complete document of the ships and merchant crews lost due to submarine action during WW-2.

The book is hard cover 8-1/2 x 11 size with over 560 pages containing over FIVE HUNDRED pictures. It contains a condensed version of what happened to each ship including its home port, the owner or operators of the vessel, the Master's name (when known), dimensions, former name(s) of ship, when and where built, time, date, and position of the action, number of crew and Naval Armed Guard on board, number of crew and Armed Guard lost, how the survivors were rescued, name or number of submarine attacking the ship and the last name of sub. commanders plus the ultimate end of the submarine.

You will find names of over 6000 merchant crew personnel who lost their lives during WW-2, including those who died in POW camps. Several appendices including lists of seamen who were awarded the Distinguished Merchant Marine Medal, Liberty ships named after seaman killed in action, Merchant Crew members taken prisoner and repatriated, Cadet/Midshipmen of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy lost while on sea duty, etc. Many other interesting statistics relating to the U.S. Merchant Marine during the conflict are covered.

The book was dedicated to the Officers and Men who sailed the ships the U.S. Merchant Marine during WW-2, especially to those who lost their lives, and to their families.

The Forward, written by perhaps the most distinguished Nautical Historian in the World and author of the wonderful series on the S. S. LEVIATHAN - "The World's Greatest Ship" appears at left. It impacts the great risk run by the merchant marine seamen during the past war.

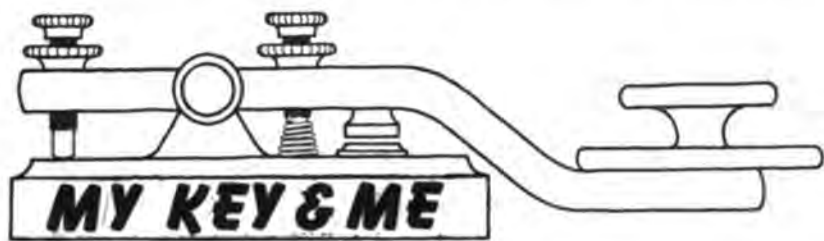
Captain Moore should be recognized and awarded high honors for this wonderful Historical Document, and this meritorious undertaking. Regrettably the passing of years [35 or more] made the task more difficult as much vital information was lost through the vicissitude and passage of time. The Society has presented Captain Moore with its "OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD" in recognition of this great service to our country.

William A. Breniman



German U-boat—The most efficient fighting ship used in World War I. Surface displacement: 1,142 tons; length: 83.5 meters (274 feet); beam: 7.5 meters (24.6 feet); surface speed: 17.5 knots; submersion speed: 7 knots; 6 torpedo tubes.





FURNISHED BY - PAUL L. SCHMIDT



T/T BAY RIDGE

11°01'N 89°08'W

EN ROUTE PUERTO ARMUELLES, PANAMA  
FROM VALDEZ, ALASKA - 10 APRIL 1982

MY KEY AND ME

WHEN I WAS A LAD, A VISION I HAD  
IT TOOK ROOT AND GREW WILD AND FREE  
IT WAS PART SACRIFICE, LACED WITH GOOD ADVICE  
FOR A LIFE ON THE SEA, MY KEY AND ME.

WITH STUDY AND GUTS, I CONTINUED MY QUEST  
INSPIRED TO STRIVE BY THE LURE OF THE SEA  
I LEARNED THE MORSE CODE AND PASSED THE TESTS  
IT WAS NOW GOING TO BE: MY KEY AND ME.

ON A MIDSUMMER'S DAY I SAILED FAR AWAY  
FROM CITIES AND SLUMS AND POVERTY  
TO FOREIGN LANDS AND BRIGHT SUNNY SANDS  
TO A DREAM - MY KEY AND ME.

ALONG CAME A WOMAN WHO SANG ME A SONG  
A WILD LORELEI - A STRANGE MELODY  
IT PULLED ON MY HEART. I COULD NOT PART  
FROM MY LOVER, MY KEY AND ME.

THE YEARS HAVE BEEN GOOD, THOUGH MANY ASHORE  
I'VE WORKED AND I'VE LOVED, AND I'VE LIVED TO SEE  
THE RIPE OLD AGE OF SEVENTY-THREE  
GOD BLESSED THOSE YEARS WITH MY KEY AND ME.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Fred Burge wrote the original\* "MY KEY AND ME" nine wandering stanzas. I plagiarized the first verse Best credit it to:  
AUTHOR UNKNOWN

To include with the above, I submit the following:

A KEY IS AN INSTRUMENT USED FOR LOCKING AND SECURING VALUABLES AGAINST THIEVERY, BUT THE KEY ALSO PERFORMS A MORE NOBLE AND GLORIOUS PURPOSE: THAT OF UNLOCKING. IT OPENS FOR US DOORS, SAFES AND CHESTS. THE KEY IS A SYMBOL OF KNOWLEDGE, WHEREBY GREAT MYSTERIES ARE MADE PLAIN; WHERE THE FUTURE IS OPENED UNTO OUR LIVES, REVEALING NEW VISIONS OF HOPE AND GRANDEUR FOR US ALL.

Visiting San Francisco? Be Sure to Make the National Maritime Museum a Stop on Your Trip

SHIP SHAPE

The National Maritime Museum



SITTING AT THE FOOT of Polk Street, overlooking the bay, the building's Moderne sleekness appears out of place. Across Beach Street, Ghirardelli Square's boxy brickwork proclaims its prosaic origins as a 19th-century factory. But this streamlined white structure, a former bathhouse, evokes a 1930s International Style elegance far removed from the jumbled look of Fisherman's Wharf, a few blocks away. The shiny railings encircling the tiers on the roof give the appearance of decks on a luxury liner, highly appropriate, given

the present use of the handsome landmark: the housing of the collection of San Francisco's National Maritime Museum. Opened in 1939, the Aquatic Park Casino bathhouse was heralded as a "palace for the public." Yet, today, all too few of the public venture inside this stylish building to enjoy the nautical artifacts, models, paintings and photos that show how important seafaring was in the development of San Francisco. The first object the visitor will see after pushing open the brass, ship's-wheel door at the entrance is the very symbol of seafaring: a towering iron anchor. It

is from the *Independence*, a warship built to fight the British in the War of 1812 and the first ship to make use of the drydock at Mare Island in the 1850s. As a display piece, it serves to indicate the massive scale of the ships, relative to human size, much the way a dinosaur skeleton does in a museum of natural history. The museum's huge nautical relics might not make an orderly display, but they do make a dynamic one. At one end of the main hall, the carved figurehead of a regally robed Mary Queen of Scots protrudes from the wall as if still on the bow of a four-master. Nearby, spiraling acanthus leaves decorate a black bow that reaches toward the high ceiling: it is from the turn-of-the-century schooner *Commerce*. But most of the objects on view are, of necessity, scaled-down models. The museum has replicas of more than 100 vessels, which range in length from 6 inches to 12 feet. The largest is a model of the longest sailing ship ever built: the German five-masted ship *Preussen*, 408 feet from bow to stern. Built in 1902, its lofty steel rigging represented the ultimate refinement of sailing-ship technology. The smallest models are examples of that traditional nautical enigma: the ship inside a tiny bottle. The exhibit on the second floor demonstrates the close relationship between maritime development and the growth of San Francisco. There is a model of the brig *Pilgrim*, which sailed through the Golden Gate in 1834 on a voyage from Medford, Massachusetts. On board was a young sailor, Richard Henry Dana, who would later record the experience in *Two Years Before the Mast*. San Francisco is

depicted as a desolate settlement with a decrepit fort, a mission and a few huts. Within two decades the ravenous demand for goods by the gold-rush settlers helped spur the development of the clipper ship. There is a model of the *Flying Cloud*, the clipper that achieved the record 89-day passage from Boston around the Horn to San Francisco. And other models, paintings and photos record the growth of both the city and its maritime industry through the mid-20th century. THE MARITIME MUSEUM has been housed in the former Aquatic Park Casino since 1951, chiefly through the efforts of Karl Kortum, chief curator. Kortum, who was raised in Petaluma on a chicken ranch, first caught sea fever during his childhood in the early 1920s when he discovered an array of inactive sailing vessels tied up at the docks in Alameda. By World War II, the demand for shipping prompted the refitting of many such vessels, and Kortum joined the bark *Kauilani* on a lumber voyage to South Africa and Australia. Back in Petaluma after the war, Kortum spent a few years reading maritime history and writing about his adventures. Then in 1949 he launched a campaign to establish a maritime museum, with a historic square-rigger to be permanently moored nearby. Mrs. Alma de Bretteville Spreckels, of the San Francisco sugar and shipping family, became a supporter of his venture and donated to the cause her collection of ship models, figureheads and paintings that she had sponsored for exhibition at the 1939 World's Fair at Treasure Island. Scott Newhall, then an assistant

editor at the *San Francisco Chronicle* and whose brother Hall had sailed with Kortum, promoted the cause within the newspaper, and the *Chronicle* championed the project with Mayor Elmer Robinson. By early 1950, the city agreed to provide use of the all-but-abandoned casino and a salary for Kortum. Almost immediately after the opening of the San Francisco Maritime Museum, Kortum began agitating for acquisition of the *Balclutha*, a square-rigged merchant ship whose maiden voyage in 1886 took her from Glasgow, around Cape Horn, to San Francisco. After plying worldwide trade routes in the 1880s and '90s, the *Balclutha* worked the Alaska salmon trade until 1930, with San Francisco as her home port. When the Museum Association purchased the ship in 1954, they rescued her from slow deterioration on the Sausalito mudflats. Since 1955, the three-masted sailing ship has been berthed at Pier 43, on Fisherman's Wharf. In 1952 the museum opened the Hyde Street Pier two blocks away on the east side of Aquatic Park. Using state park funds generated by the sale of offshore oil leases, the museum was able to acquire and restore a fleet of historic ships, two of which the public can board. They are the massive steam passenger ferry *Eureka*, active on the Bay between 1890 and 1957, and the sailing schooner *C. A. Thayer*, a commercial vessel that hauled lumber to the South Seas, salmon from Alaska and codfish from the Bering Sea. In the late 1970s the Aquatic Park property of the museum, the *Balclutha* and the Hyde Street Pier were united as The National Maritime Museum,

part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and under the auspices of the National Park Service. The museum's library recently moved to expanded quarters at Fort Mason. And in August the museum reopens its newly reorganized Steamship Room, illustrating the history of the steamship on the West Coast between the 1830s and 1960s. **National Maritime Museum**, at the foot of Polk Street, at Beach, San Francisco. (415) 556-8177. Open daily 10:00 am-6:00 pm (closes at 5:00 pm beginning in October). Admission is free. **Balclutha** sailing ship, Pier 43, Fisherman's Wharf. Open daily 9:00 am-10:00 pm. Admission is \$2 for adults; \$1 for juniors; 25¢ for children. **Hyde Street Pier**, at the foot of Hyde Street at Jefferson. (415) 556-6435. Open daily 10:00 am-6:00 pm (closes 5:00 pm beginning in October). Admission is free. **J. Porter Shaw Library** of the National Maritime Museum. Fort Mason, Building E, third floor. Tuesday-Friday 1:00 pm-5:00 pm; Saturday 10:00 am-5:00 pm. • *Suzann Boettger*





## World's Most Powerful Salvage Tug - 1913

GEORGE YOUNG

The tug in this picture dates back to 1913. When built in Glasgow to the order of the South African government, the twin screw LUDWIG WIENER created a sensation as the world's most powerful salvage tug (2,400 hp) radio telegraphy, a searchlight, formidable salvage pumps, and fire-fighting plant. No tug had ever been built with such an impressive plant. Before being delivered to her homeport at Cape Town, the LUDWIG WIENER (658 tons gross) was a showpiece of the builders, Ferguson Bros., Port Glasgow. And for her time she cost a lot, about \$50,000. She initiated a type of tug which the South Africans thereafter built in large numbers, but with greater power, until switching in 1970 to tractor tugs, embodying the patent propulsion enabling them to push at all angles and turn in their own length.

The biggest sensation in the LUDWIG WIENER was her Marconi rotary spark transmitter and coherer receiver which, the publicity in 1913 claimed, "was as good as the gear in the Titanic." It was, in fact, a replica of the Titanic plant, but it suffered serious range problems because of the short antenna.

The distance between the masts was only about 50 feet and the best wavelength for reception of the transmitter was about 150 meters. (Nobody talked in kilocycles in those days.) Range in daylight was only about 80 miles, and was dependent on the steam-driven generator providing its full 110 volts, which was not always possible. Without a full delivery of power, the stone-crusher sounded like a hospital patient doing a throat gargle. And when a crystal receiver was provided in the tug, the Crystal was knocked off resonance every time the operator pressed the key. He usually got the receiver going again in time to hear the other stations say AR. Radio was an adventure in those days, especially in a tug where power was always a problem. If the searchlight was used, then there was no power for the radio.

However, in World War I, the British navy was so badly in need of patrol ships that the LUDWIG WIENER was commandeered as HMS AFRIKANDER and it was planned to send her up the Rufidji River in East Africa in search of the German gunboat KONIGSBERG, known to be hiding there. But with mere 3 pdr guns (in place of lifeboats) the AFRIKANDER would not have stood much chance against the KONIGSBERG. The operation was cancelled because, with a draught of 16 feet, the tug was too deep for the river. But she patrolled the southern African coast, her water-tube boilers consuming more than 35 tons of coal a day at 12 knots. But on one occasion when an enemy landing was suspected, the AFRIKANDER gave chase off the coast one night and worked up to 16 knots. The red glow over her stack gave the game away, and the foe escaped. Plant was found on the beach next morning, however.

The old stone-crusher was of great value on the occasions when the tug went to sea on rescue operations in war and peace. She ran across a minefield in the approaches to her homeport in 1917 when the passenger steamer CITY OF ATHENS, inwards from New York, was holed by a mine and the crew abandoned her. The tug landed everybody.

After World War I, the stone-crusher again put her in touch with an American steamer AMBRIDGE, adrift in the South Atlantic sans a screw.

It was not until 1932 that the tug received a face lift in the radio room. After racing to the aid of a stranded British tramp, HALERIC, off the west African coast, the radio gear in the stricken ship was recovered and the MR4B receiver, a none-too-selective detector fitted by Marconi in cargo ships in the 1920's found a new home in the radio room of the LUDWIG WIENER. But the sparker always had problems when engaged in radio traffic off the coast. The broadcast stations on 450 and 550 meters which radiated from Cape Town and at Grahamstown, 500 miles further east, respectively, invariably so swamped the receiver in the course of coastal voyages that the tug was out of touch until after the music ceased near midnight. After that hour, the high levels of X's made it difficult for the stone-crusher to be heard.

So it was with some relief in 1935 that the spark gear was turfed out and the Marconi TW 12 ICW/RT transmitter was installed. But the radio technicians in the port had to build a wave-trap for the receiver, because the 10 kw broadcast stations were still flooding the RX. When a cargo ship, WINTON, was misled by an aircraft warning light atop one of the broadcast station masts (the Captain thought it was a breakwater light) and piled up less than a mile from the broadcast transmitting aerial, the QRM from the respective radio staffs was scarcely bearable.



The famous South African tug Ludwig Wiener, built in 1913, was given the same radio plant as the Titanic.

Many ships had this QRM problem from broadcast stations, and just after the cargo ship sparkers had shut down one night, their auto-alarms recalled them to duty. There was no distress signal, but a contralto singing with an orchestra accompaniment, held her notes in Ave Maria so effectively, that she produced all the requisite dashes for a distress, and ships everywhere were pinned by the ears. Music on 550 meters splashed all over the 600m watch frequency, and it sounded like a cat's concert.

The LUDWIG WIENER was engaged through World War II on rescue and salvage operations, too, but her 2,400 hp was no longer so significant, for 4,000 hp tugs began to emerge. In 1981 there are four of 20,000 hp.

But few tugs enjoyed a more spectacular career, and represented such a fine example of Scots shipbuilding, for in the 40 years before she was eventually scrapped, there had never been a breakdown even if, on one salvage job, she performed at three-quarter's power when a boiler was out of circuit because of a leaking joint.

### Editorial Comment

George Young 3443-P, a Marine Writer for nearly 50 years, has been ZSIY for 45 years. He maintains almost daily schedules with operators in the U.S. and Canada. He has always regarded radio as the second bow to his fiddle, and after running a daily shipping feature in a Cape Town [South Africa] Daily for 43 years, he is now correspondent in South Africa for the famous international shipping daily, Lloyd's List, of London. The tug pictured is from his filed collection of about 12,000 negatives of ships. The Salvage Tug Ludwig Wiener carried identical gear to that of the great Trans-Atlantic Liner Titanic.

## Communication Around Robin Hood's Barn

Had many experiences as a Naval radio operator during WW-2. One that sticks out in my mind was the time we were returning from landing troops at a small beachhead called San Antonio just south of Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines. Somewhere off Manila we were torpedoed by a midget submarine.

The blast didn't sink us but it did knock off the screw, leaving us dead in the water. Fortunately we had a seagoing tug in the convoy which took us in tow, but the rate of progress was painfully slow.

During this time we tried to establish contact with Radio Leyte to get some air support in order to sink the submarine. Atmospheric conditions just didn't want to cooperate.

At this time Radio Washington D.C. (NSS) came up and said they were in contact with Leyte and would relay our message, which they did. We got the air cover and the submarine was sunk.

At the time Leyte wasn't 200 miles from where we were. But it all ended well.

This was sometime in 1944. Of course there were many other memories of those days, but they can keep for another time.

-Jim Hatherly  
WA1TBY  
46 Hobson St., Brighton MA.

## Brass Pounding - Then and Now

By Dexter S Bartlett

In 1915 Marconi paid \$30.00 a month with no fringe benefits. Now it's \$1,000.00. If the skipper keeps you busy at odd hours, especially on Saturdays and Sundays, it's overtime with the possibility of \$4,000.00 a month.

Then you ate hardtack and goulash in the messroom and walked a few steps to your radio shack. Now you eat a gourmet meal and take the ship's elevator to your radio office.

However, in yesteryears, by memorizing the blueprint of a 2KW Spark transmitter, you were able to get a radio license. Now you have to bone up on radar, sonar, loran, and chip circuit radio apparatus. But, then you had to have the skipper's endorsement on your license, or no soap. Now licenses are automatically renewed.

In bygone days we had to carry our own tube receiver to get results. Now the ship's gear is the most modern.

Once upon a time it took the big sum of \$20.00 to join the United Radio Telegraphers Association. Now it costs \$2,000.00 to join a radio association, but it's probably worth it.

Then if you worked 100 miles it was a record. Now off the coast of Japan it is easy to clear KPH or KFS.

Long ago, on the beach, you ate in a greasy spoon beanery, or at times went hungry. Nowadays, you go on rocking chair money for six months, or social security, plus pensions.

When death did overtake you at sea, they sewed you up in a canvas sack with junk iron and heaved you overboard. Nowadays, they put you in the refrigerator, along with the bananas.

Also, with some companies you had to hang the phones on the hook and copy manifests. Never mind SOS calls and there were no SOS alarms. Of course without extra pay.

In days gone by you copied KPH press through QRM and QRN. Now you turn on the TV, at least on the coast run.

In prehistoric times it was a six on, six off watch. In this enlightened age passenger ships have three operators and sometimes four.

Then in those ghastly days Sparks was the low man on the totem pole. Now he is equal to the first mate.

One bad feature of modern times is that you have to lock everything up. In the days of wooden ships and iron men thieves were conked on the head with a marlin spike.

All I can say is to heck with the good old days.

**EDITOR'S NOTE** "Old Bart" as he liked to call himself was tapped by the Chief Operator on March 15 1982 to serve in the Celestial Chapter. He was one of the Society's early historians and he served us well - dedicated a great amount of his time researching and writing articles for Society publications. Many will appear late

## BRASS POUNDING & POLISHING ON THE SS SAN PEDRO

BY - DONALD T. WRIGHT

At last, a berth on a 6,000 ton inter-coastal freighter and what a shack: 2-KW quenched spark gapper and a Navay Standard RX that brought in signals. Wow. VAE, KPE, KPK, KEK, KFS, KTK, KUP, KOK, NPL, XDA, NAX, NBA, WNU, WPD, WAX, WNY, WSL, LIGHT SHIPS, RADIO COMPASS SHORE STATIONS. Oh, how I loved to hear that wailing note of KFS as he cut the rotary spark gap motor switch while still signing.

One of the last admonishments given me by the Company Radio Supervisor was, "And don't forget to polish the brass while you are resting." Why, the crook! What did he mean? Of all the paper work the Old Man had me do: cargo manifests, custom lists, payroll, letters galore which I had to compose from my own vocabulary. His wasn't fit to type. Then there was the night work, sweating to get bearings on 800 meters from the flea-powered RC shore stations. Would barely get back to sleep when the Captain's messenger would knock on the door, "Top side, Sparks." More bearings. Obviously, he was a barking dog skipper and between the dogs and compass bearings, he did manage to keep us off the California rocks.

I polished those acres of helix coils, switch-blades, spark-gap fins and frequently over-hauled the couple dozen quench units, replacing the punctured gaskets. I could get 16 amps of antenna current on the hot-wire meter with a good set of gaps. The thirsty worn-out batteries kept me on the jump, too. They wouldn't take much of a charge but, oh, how they drank up the distilled water. Upon completion of the first voyage, the Radio Supervisor came aboard and chewed me out good for missing a 'IR' that got lost near the canal but his main grievance was the dirty brass.

Second voyage, I polished brass until I got bursitis. Oh, he wouldn't have anything to complain about this time. You could shave by the reflection from the gear. That is, you could until the last stop before reaching home port, Portland. We docked in the Oakland Mole near a cooking gas manufacturing plant. Had left the shack door on the hook. Next morning when I entered the shack, what I saw nearly caused me to jump over the side. The fumes from that gas plant had turned the brass to a sickly blue-green color. At Portland I lost no time in resigning before the Supervisor showed up. Then I got myself a job operating at the Nushagak Cannery in Alaska and found to my huge delight a tube job that had no brass to polish.

## World's Fastest Operator?

The subject matter of this letter has undoubtedly been covered in your publications many times previous to my joining SOWP but it is such an interesting subject that it should be worth repeating.

In the 1930s MacElroy claimed in his advertisements that he was the world's fastest operator. Perhaps he was the fastest amateur operator but I can definitely testify that he was not the world's fastest.

In 1937 WCK had two press schedules which were the only (or primary) sources of news available to ships at sea. One schedule was transmitted at a speed of about 45 wpm and intended to be copied by ear. The other was transmitted for WUX operation which we estimated at a speed of about 100 wpm.

Two of my shipmates were able to copy the MUX schedule solid. They were Pete Pettit, Chief Radioman, and Paul Magarris, Radioman First Class. (Paul went down on a destroyer in the North Atlantic during WW-II.) I was able to copy one or two lines of this schedule solid. Moon Mullins, another Navy operator, was also extremely fast. Although I was considered to be one of the Navy's fast speed key operators, Moon could outperform me.

In those days we passed much traffic with the LURLINE the MARIPOSA, the MATSONIA and the MALOLO of the Matson Line, and also through KOK. These merchant-marine operators were highly experienced but most of them had that "Asiatic" swing, which was beautiful to copy but not very fast.

I would like to hear from our members: Who in their opinion was the world's fastest radio operator? Would it be possible to publish this subject in the SKIPPERS LOG?

9 February 1982

-Very sincerely,  
M. R. Peters (Pete)  
Chief Radioman, USN (Retired)  
3847-P

## Dominion Line Memories

Let me tell you how thrilled I was to read the article in the recent edition of SPARKS JOURNAL, of the flashback to 1924. ("Afloat and Ashore with the Operator," by W.S.Fitzpatrick, in the May, 1924 WIRELESS AGE). It mentioned Benjamin Beckerman on the Old Dominion Line vessel SS JEFFERSON. I was 19 years old when I got my first assignment and Ben was the first Chief Operator I ever worked under. He was a swell guy.

We had only the two operators on that ship. My watch began at 2 a.m. It was my first night at sea and Ben knew I was nervous. He stayed on until about 3:30 a.m.

The first ship I heard calling us about 5 a.m. was the SS HAMILTON of the same line. I had to wake Ben to answer him as his speed was too fast for me. Ben said it was his brother who was just showing off because he knew I was a beginner. Ben gave him the "what for," and after that it was smooth sailing.

By the way, I wonder if the W.S.Fitzpatrick who wrote the article was the same man who signed us on at RCA? (Yes, we believe it was. - Ed.)

Carl L. Jones, mentioned in the article, relieved Ben Beckerman on his time off so that I worked as Second operator under Carl as well.

The article certainly brings back memories. I will be 79 this coming August; all that was 60 years ago!

Very best regards to all.

12 April, 1983

-Edward H. Scofield 1502-SGP  
18 Fern Avenue  
Chatham, N J 07928

# "Via the Amazon to Rio"

## WW-2 Requires Pan Am to Pioneer New Route

DIFFICULT INSTALLATION OF A RADIO STATION  
IN THE WILDS OF COLOMBIA  
DURING WW-II

In the fall of 1942, when there was some concern as to whether Germany might try to invade the east coast of South America, PAA was still flying Clippers to Buenos Aires along the coast. Somebody at the top came up with the idea if such an invasion should take place, that southern South America might be cut off from North America; and as Brazil was the principle source of crystals, a route through central South America might be feasible.

Panair Do Brasil was already flying up the Amazon to Manaus, and further up the river there was another place called Janiffe (?). The plan was to put a radio station there, and another one along the Orinoco, so that a route from Maracaibo or Barranquilla could be flown practically all the way over water.

I was chosen for the job of installing the second station at Puerto Carreno, Colombia. The Company transported the selected equipment which consisted of a 1-kw low-frequency navigation transmitter, a 150-watt high-frequency transmitter, a 5-kw generator, a 1 1/2-kw generator, receivers, cables, antenna wire, tools and hardware, to be delivered to Bogota.

Early one morning, along with an American pilot, a Colombian copilot, a young radio technician from Cubana, we took off from Bogota's El Techo airport (altitude about 7000 feet) in an old Ford trimotor monoplane. We flew to a town named Villavicencio, where we spent the night. The next day we took off for Puerto Carreno, where the "airport" was just an open place on the llanos marked by two kegs on 8-foot posts about 100 yards apart. The reason for landing in that particular spot was because of the foot-high anthills, baked so hard in the sun that they were as solid as bricks; They could easily damage the wheels of a plane if it ran into them.

Upon arrival we were met by a group of workers assembled by an Avianca man who had preceded us. But----problem! There was not a wheeled vehicle, wagon, cart, wheelbarrow--or even so much as a baby-carriage in the whole village! What to do?

We disassembled all the gear and jacked the mile and a half to the site where the station was to be set up - in a building housing the Colombian government radio station. The accompanying photos, taken by me, were of that backbreaking project.

After about five weeks of sweaty work the station went on the air and I sent a message to Miami asking for a station manager and some radio operators. AS I remember it, we had to import some 40-foot wooden poles (for the antenna) from Venezuela, because except for some very thick shrubbery alongside the watercourses, there were no trees on the llanos.



Richard M. "Dick" JONES  
Cleaning up after re-assembly of 5-KW and 5-KW Generators at Puerto Carrena Colombia - Oct. 1942.



Snap by Dick Jones.

View of Puerto Carreno, Col. Oct. 1942



Transporting rotor of 5KW Generator



Main Street, Puerto Carreno, Col. Group at lower

right meeting 1st PAA CLIPPER to land in Oronoco River

But we did get the station on the air! It was during the time that the successful invasion of North Africa by the Allies took place, and as I had a small Hallicrafters short-wave receiver (which I had declared at Customs as "test equipment"), almost everybody in the village congregated at my room--in the house of the Comisario--the governor of the Province of Vichada, to listen to the news from far away: the U.S.A. the BBC, etc. I didn't speak much Spanish then and from time to time I had to switch to an English-language station to hear what was going on.

That's about the story, dredged up from 35 years ago as best my memory serves me. It might be interesting to some of the old-timers, particularly PAA people who might still be around.

73s to all.  
Dick.

-Richard M. Jones (2751-P--  
W4BTM)  
27204 S.W. 143rd Avenue  
Naranja FL 33032

Dick adds a postscript: "Please excuse the lousy typing. Practically blind in one eye and have cataract in the other, so things are tough all over!" (The typing is not really all that bad; we've seen worse - Ed.)



ORONOCO RIVER - Puerto Carreno Columbia - 10-1943



PAA CLIPPER in Oronoco River, Puerto Carreno, Col. Oct. 42



Moving a 1KW transmitter 1-1/2 miles across the llanos in Puerto Carreno, Co. Oct. 1942

# VOYAGE OF THE SS COYOTE

Log - Black Sea Trip - 1919

BY MELVIN GRUMMET 1740-P

My first ship as wireless operator was the S/S COYOTE. I was 18. She was a wooden ship with a cargo of matches and well-drilling machinery bound for Russian Black Sea ports. She lay at anchor off the Statue of Liberty. I got my first glimpse of her from a launch bouncing around in choppy waves. She rode high in the water with quite a list and badly in need of paint -- she wasn't exactly a cruise ship but I wanted her and she needed me ("no one else was available") and we sailed out of New York harbor July 3, 1919.

Racing along at eight knots, two days out of New York, in a light fog and waning daylight there was a strange red glow over and around the ship -- it came from 25-foot flames spouting out of the stack -- the result of coal gas burning.

On the wireless, homebound troop ships jammed the air with personal messages they had to clear -- the operators were ruthless -- you couldn't get a word in edgeways even with the MSG preamble. Captain Farrow couldn't understand why I had so much difficulty getting messages off but no problem getting baseball scores.

July 7. Blew a boiler tube and drifted for three hours in moderate sea. Rolled heavily when ship paralleled waves. Everything not lashed down went flying because of the unexpected violent list. Underway again at 4 P.M.

At 11 P.M. the speaker tube whistle shrieked. It was the bridge telling me to standby there, there was a fire amidships. Now I could hear the crew working and see lights flashing. Engines were slowed or stopped and the ship's course changed just enough to bring heavy smoke into the radio room. The captain came in with a scribbled note and position -- telling me not to send it unless he told me to. He said the overheated stack had set the wooden bulkheads afire. Half an hour or so later he came back and told me I could turn in.

## CRUISING THE 'MED'



MALTA ISLAND - South of Sicily in the Mediterranean [Mare Internum]



Fishing Boat on the Bosphorus - 1919



Fortress we passed on the Straits of the Bosphorus - 1919



Sightseeing in Malta



Ferry Boat crossing the Bosphorus

## Land Ho ! Gibraltar



S.S. COYOTE off Rock of Gibraltar - 1919



Diver repairing leak on the S.S. COYOTE.



Headland at Gibraltar taken from a distance by Melvin Grummett.



S.S. COYOTE - Wooden Ship. New York to the Black Sea and return - 1919.



This "made" Mel Grummett's Day ! [Gibraltar - 1919]

July 9. Hove to in heavy sea.

July 11. Making 6 knots in moderate sea. Called to bridge at 10 P.M. to work signal light. A ship close to the horizon asked if we were afire. Advised her that it was coal gas burning out of stack. She replied, "Bon Voyage."

July 12. Captain says we're low on fresh water due to boiler tube trouble and changed course for Azores. Says with a little luck we'll make it. Now making 5 knots. Rain squalls ahead. Crew rigging fire hoses from boat deck drain into fresh water tank. Rainfall is heavy, providing enough water to assure reaching Azores.

July 21. Gibraltar 600 miles ahead. Seas choppy -- all hands needed for some chore on deck -- Captain told me to take wheel and ring bell if any ships came in sight.

July 25. Dropped anchor in Gibraltar Bay waiting turn at coal dock.

July 27. Went sailing in ship's service boat with Chief Mate, Bos'n and an oiler. Bos'n said he'd like to stretch his legs. Chief put us ashore on deserted part of beach, telling us to return to this spot in exactly two hours. Returning two hours later we saw a Spanish soldier with a rifle running toward the boat with the Chief in it.

We raced to the boat and shoved off hoping to get out of range but we didn't make it. The guard knelt and took aim. The Chief quickly put the tiller hard over then stood up waving his white cap wildly in the air. The soldier lowered his rifle. The Chief remarked, "That was too close for comfort." Eventually we were cleared and allowed to take off, thanks to a young kid we had hired earlier in town as a guide.

July 28. Moved in to coal dock. Filled bunkers and loaded an additional 500 tons in burlap bags to be carried on deck. A company agent said there would be no coal available en route except at Malta where the price was very high. The coal dust made a mess of the ship. Just prior to sailing, two American government men came aboard for passage to Novorossiisk. Sailed 6:30 P.M. bound for Constantinople.

July 31. Obtained latest minefield instructions from USS Hazelwood homebound from Constantinople.

August 1. Spanish cruiser Claudio Lopez gave us list of floating mine positions sighted in Aegean Sea.

(Continued on Page 13)

# S.S.Coyote-"Never a Dull Moment"!

(Continued from Page 12)

August 7. Passed four British minesweepers, bound for England. Said they had been sweeping in Black Sea. British battleship Ocean visible on beach laying on her side and half submerged as we approached Dardanelles. Sighted floating mine drifting in current as we moved up Dardanelles. Passed Gallipoli 2:30 P.M. Hundreds of townspeople on beach waving flags. I'm told that we are second American merchant ship to pass through Dardanelles -- the first being another wooden ship, the S/S Kickapoo.

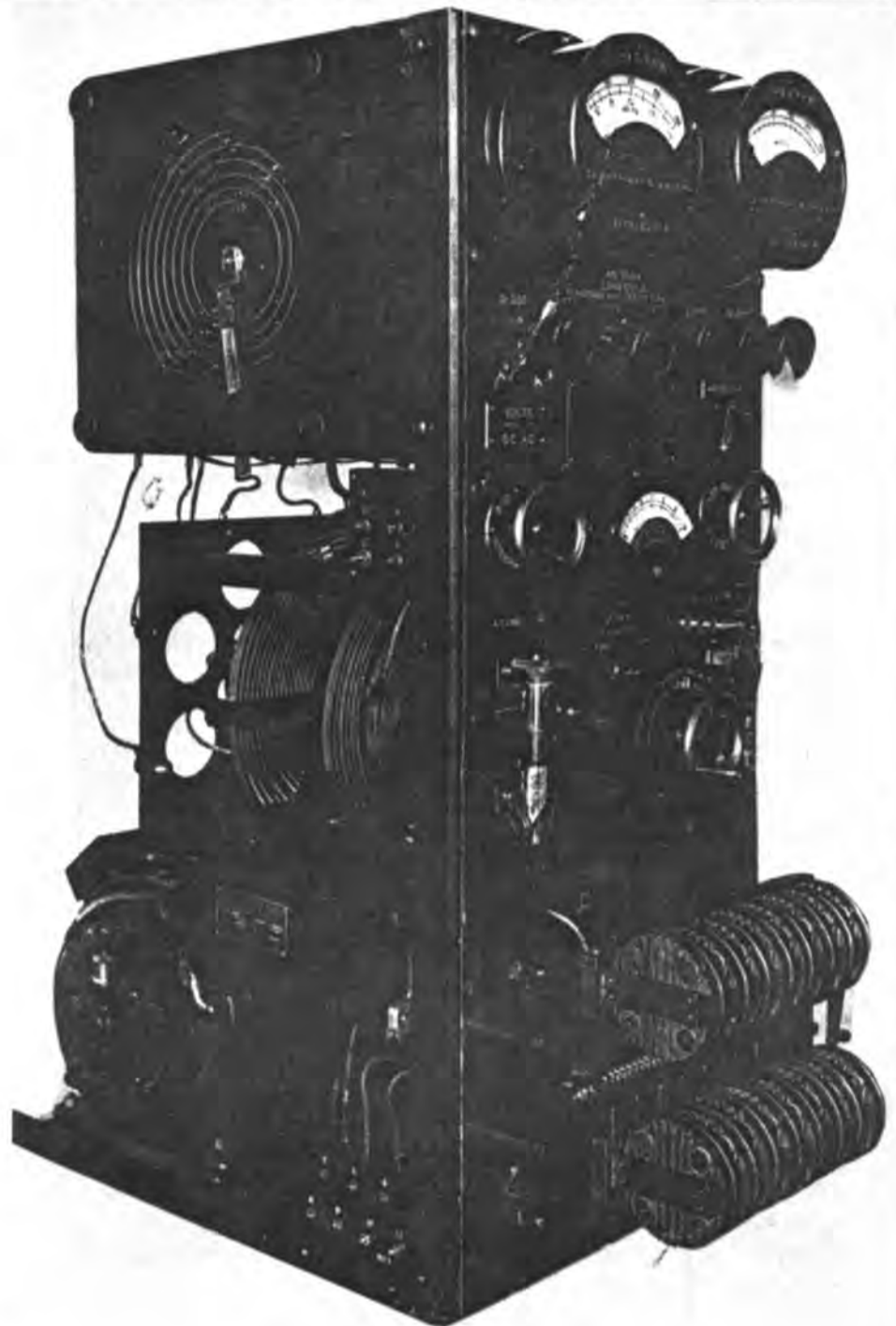
August 8. Dropped anchor off Constantinople 5:30 A.M. Italian, English, French and American warships here. Captain advised of bubonic epidemic at Novorossiisk. Ship's destination changed to Batoum. Our two passengers disembark to continue their trip to Novorossiisk on a destroyer. Also got word that Bolshevik at Odessa have taken over cables and only communication with Batoum is by radio.

August 9. Entered Black Sea 9 A.M. Very rough and choppy. Took water on deck first time since leaving New York

August 12. Anchored off Batoum. Captain advised by agent to rush turnabout as conditions here are very bad. Indian and Cossack soldiers are guarding dock.

August 13. At dock discharging cargo. A Russian ship with deck full of refugees from ports to the north are jumping overboard and swimming ashore because of delay in quarantine clearance. A British launch from a destroyer is firing machine guns into the water as it circles ship to discourage further desertions. Two Russian boys with a note to the Captain are allowed on board. The note was from the American destroyer 152 asking the Captain to take care of the boys as they had orders to leave Batoum. One of the English cruisers is firing broadsides intermittently. Our agent says it is done to discourage rebellion ashore. P.M. first shore leave for crew -- many fail to return -- others too drunk to work. Asked American destroyer 155 for assistance in handling crew. Ship searched -- all liquor confiscated. Shore leave cancelled.

August 16. Crew refuse to work unless granted shore leave. It is given with a warning. Late P.M. - Russian coalpasser returning to ship fell through hole in dock and drowned. Chief Engineer and others dove repeatedly in deep water trying to save him but no success.



## KXUU - S.S.Coyote Transmitter

August 19. Coalpasser's body located by diver in 30 feet of water directly below hole in pier. His body is on the dock with a white bloodstained sheet over it. A Russian doctor came aboard today and asked if he could take place of dead man to work his way to U.S. Cargo at bottom of number two hold ruined by leak.

August 23. Sailed from Batoum to Poti a few hours run up the coast to load manganese ore. Scotty, Second Engineer, developed DT's, racing all over ship screaming that snakes were after him. Several men were trying to hold him but he broke loose, ran off the ship and disappeared into a patch of woods. S/S Christian Nebe anchored nearby with 2,400 Georgian war prisoners from Germany.

August 31. Chief Mate fired revolver at man fleeing down gangway. The shots alerted a Russian gunboat nearby. They pulled over and boarded the ship demanding all firearms. Captain refused and ordered them to leave or he would call an American destroyer from Batoum. They left.

September 1. Finished loading 1350 tons of manganese and prepared to sail. A large group of bedraggled Russian refugees from further north, carrying everything they owned came to the ship and begged to be taken to Batoum. Contacted HMS Thesus at Batoum and permission was granted. A stowaway was found hiding in coal bunkers. Two crew members not on board at sailing time. One of them is missing Engineer. Arrived Batoum 4:30 P.M. Anchored for night waiting for quarantine inspection tomorrow. No dock space available.

September 3. Moved in to dock. Batoum now under martial law. Posters say anyone on streets after 11 P.M. will be shot. Agent says there were several public executions in town today. Second Engineer, who disappeared at Poti was located by British soldiers. They found him walking railroad tracks. Didn't know who he was or how he got there. Uptown met radio-man from Italian destroyer and he invited me to visit his ship.

Italian wine is very good. I got lost going back to Coyote in the darkness. Turning a corner with a high fence I walked into the point of a bayonet on a rifle held by East Indian British soldier. After identification he told me how to get back to the ship.

(Continued on Page 14)



## Flotsam & Jetsam

# Mel Grummet's Black Sea Odyssey

September 4. Finished loading 1200 tons of baled licorice root.

September 5. Loading mahogany logs all day.

September 6. Visited Russian ship Irtysk. She has three radio operators. One of them is American. His name is Payne and he comes from Brooklyn. He wears thick lens glasses and has one artificial leg. He wants passage back to States on Coyote.

September 8. Loaded 60 tons copper ore and some more licorice root. Moved out to anchorage 4 P.M. to take on 20 tons of rugs from barge. The two boys who have now been living on the Coyote for a month had to be sent ashore prior to sailing. They were crying.

September 13. Reduced speed 4:30 P.M. to avoid entering mined area until daylight. Ship rolling heavily, due to sea and wind direction.

September 14. Sent ETA to USS Scorpion at Constantinople. Entered Bosphorus ignoring signals from quarantine station. Anchored off Constantinople 10 A.M. Strong wind and current. Dropped two anchors. One fouled and broke windlass. Quarantine flag ignored by health authorities. Scorpion doesn't answer calls.

September 16. Health authorities finally came aboard and told captain he is very lucky not to be fined for refusal to stop at fumigation station.

September 18. Sailing day notice posted. Captain ashore -- no shore leave for anyone else. Our radio operator passenger Payne was in deck chair minus glasses and wooden leg when he saw a bum boat drift away from a rope ladder to which it had been tied. He dove in to retrieve it but the current and wind moved it so fast he couldn't catch up.

Just then the Captain came aboard and told the mate to get ready to sail. He told of a man overboard - but Payne and boat had disappeared. A one-hour search circling anchored ships in a launch failed to find any sign of Payne. His gear including leg and glasses and the stranded bumboatman were taken ashore and we sailed at 5 P.M. bound for Gibraltar.



## Pioneer "Pick" Chapter Trio-de (Plate, Grid, Cathode)

MELVIN L. GRUMMET It takes a 'Trio' to make a Triode work ! "Mel"(Left) - Early day Spark-Gapper [1740] worked up our Bristol Bay Certificates some years back. He has literally spent a life-time which his key. THEODORE W. MORRIS Center is the 'Grid' of our trio. "Ted" is one of our "fly-boy" FOP's with many years of flying and high adventure on his record including a SOS from the sky. J.STANLEY SCHANTZ Rich is the Cathode of this Chapter XI-"Pick" team. Jack was CHOP for many years. Sailed MM from 1919 to 1927 then at Bdc. Stn. WFIL for 40-years(±). A salute to these fine members of the Society.

September 23. Not enough coal left on board to reach Gibraltar. Arrived Malta and took on some coal at \$30 a ton. Cable from Constantinople that Payne was picked up O.K. in Sea of Mamora.

September 29. Arrived Gibraltar leaking in #4 hold. Making arrangements for inspection.

October 9. Diver found cable wound around propeller shaft and worked all week to correct leak. Took on 550 tons of coal.

October 11. Sailed 6 P.M. for Philadelphia. Will take Southern route across Atlantic as required by insurance company.

October 15. Ninety miles NW of Madeira Islands the weather was good but there were very heavy ground swells from the North. The ship running parallel to the waves hit three waves in a row and each time the ship rolled further. On the last one, the galley stove broke loose and started a fire. Plenty of smoke but not much damage. Changed course.

October 19. Noon position 27:52 N 27:54 W. Again hit by heavy ground swells from North causing ship to roll 33 degrees.

October 26. Very hot. No air circulation. Smoke from stack going straight up due to following breeze. Refrigerator broke down.

October 27. Captain decided to change course for St. Thomas to shift cargo, make repairs and take on coal and supplies. There is sea kelp all around ship. Smells like an inland swamp. Log is unuseable because it fouls in kelp. The Chief Mate and a couple of firemen have a scuffle on deck -- they told him they are going to beat him up when ship arrives at St. Thomas. Captain sending request to have police boat meet ship on arrival.

October 31. Anchored 6:30 P.M. St. Thomas. The Chief Mate and a water tender were battling it out when police launch arrived. The man was taken ashore.

November 4. Went to anchorage 1 P.M. and another fight started. Called for police launch and things were straightened out. Sailed for Philadelphia midnight.

November 10. Noon position 29:18 N 73:40 W. Made 80 miles since noon yesterday. Seas very rough. Rolling 35 degrees. Changed course to ease strain. Cockroaches getting crushed in cracks as ship heaves. Weather reports from other ships all bad or worse. Captain Farrow decided to change course for Charleston, S. C.

November 14. Anchored Charleston, S. C. Captain quit or got fired. Relief Captain being sent from New York. Went sailing in service boat with Chief, Third and Slim.

November 25. Docked Camden, N.J. Paid off November 28. Checked in New York Marconi Office. Mr. Collison said, "How soon can you sail?" Visited Payne's Brooklyn address, 100 S. Oxford Street, Brooklyn to see if he was O.K. They said he was well and off on another trip.

December 11. Signed on S/S Bellerose bound for Antwerp.



(Continued from Page 13)



Armenian Refugees - British Soldier on guard - Batoum, Russia - 1919



Loading Manganese Ore at Poli on Black Sea



Church at Batoum Russia



East Indiana Giant - Almost seven feet tall.



Harbor Scene at Batoum Russia

## THE FIRST TRANS ATLANTIC CABLE

### Cyrus Field Had His Problems

By- Don de Neut

**M**ost historical references to the so-called "Cyrus Field Atlantic Cable" (1857-1858) attribute the early difficulties with the first cable to its parting at various times during the laying operation. Although this element was the cause of many delays and frustrations, one rarely finds reference to a much worse problem--insulation defects--so serious when the facts are reviewed that it is almost unbelievable that a signal of any kind could be received over the cable. When it was in the process of manufacture in Greenwich near London, it was coiled in four large vats, and there left exposed day after day to the heat of a summer sun which was intensified by the tarred coating. Explicit orders had been given that sheds be erected over the vats to prevent this, but for unexplained reasons they were never erected. As a result when laying time arrived large sections of the gutta-percha insulation were found to have melted and left exposed the conductor. Some thirty miles of faulty cable were cut out and discarded before laying, but the many miles of cable which was deemed acceptable, or sufficiently good to warrant the gamble of submerging, deteriorated badly during the laying operations. Despite the large current leakages of the conductor to ground in the salt water, some four hundred messages were successfully transmitted between Ireland and Newfoundland.

There was a persistent degree of scepticism for a time in some quarters that the cable was ever actually laid, and that the whole affair was a hoax. But, with the actual exchange of messages such as those between England's Queen and the President of the U. S., people everywhere began to fully appreciate the importance of such a communications link. Accolades and poems appeared in the news journals, and impromptu displays of flags, illuminations and the sounds of bells celebrated the new ties between the Old and New Worlds.

But the success of the first cable was short-lived. As the insulation deteriorated further after being submerged, higher voltages were impressed on the cable hoping this would force through a readable signal. When the voltage was increased to some 2,000 what was left of the gutta-percha was punctured in so many places that the cable finally became completely "silent" forever.

But Cyrus Field refused to acknowledge defeat and in 1865 founded the Atlantic Telegraph Company and contracted for another cable laying across the Atlantic in 1866. The venture was a success and a reliable facility was finally realized.

It is rare to find a reference in telecommunications history to the fact that the French Government was, in the period 1869-1870, instrumental in forming a company known as "PQ." (These happened to be in initials of one chief officers of the company.) PQ laid its first cable in 1869 between Brest and St. Pierre Miquelon (French island possession south of Newfoundland) a distance of 2685 nautical miles. It obtained from the US a cable landing license and laid its second cable in 1898 from Brest direct to Cape Cod which was the longest cable ever laid up to the time--3174 nautical miles in length.

In these early days most cable signals were read through the fluctuation of galvanometers with code signals based on spacings between positive and negative "keying currents" applied from the sending end. Signalling techniques advanced through the use of tiny mirrors reflecting a light beam from an oil lamp. Then extremely sensitive ink-siphon-recording on paper tape was developed which increased the speed of signalling. By the turn of the century "magnifiers" were developed using thermo-mechanical principles, and later "regenerator" techniques greatly improved the speed capabilities. All however continued to use the original polar changing technique offered by the use of direct current. \*\*

All the old DC telegraphic transatlantic undersea cables went into abandonment with the advent of the laying of new multi-voice-grade-co-axial type cables in 1956.

It is interesting to note that today in 1975, PQ, the French Cable Company, still exists in New York, operating channels between New York and Paris using the new coaxial cable facilities. It is the only foreign telecommunications concern operating in the US in direct competition with the US owned international carriers (RCA-Global, ITT-Worldcom, and WU-International).

Should the question arise, the answer is no, the French Government does not permit non-French carriers to operate in France. All telecommunications in France are a monopoly of the "Postes & Telecommunications," a government entity.

\*\* A no-signal or "space" condition was indicated by the galvanometer needle resting at "zero-center." Code signal dots appeared to the left and dashes to the right. On the siphon-tape recording technique used in the later years, the dots were above, and dashes below "zero-center." Actually the inherent electrical sluggishness of the cable could not at usual operating speeds show the individual dots and dashes on the tape recording. Operators learned to read the intended signal by the length of time the pen remained below or above the "zero-center" line for each character. For example, the four dots involved in the letter "H" caused the pen to remain on the upper side of "zero-center" four times as long as it did for the letter "E". (See Fig. 1 of actual cable tape recording.)

PS: Cable handkeys were double-levered affairs, with two buttons--one on each lever. Normally the first finger keyed the lefthand lever which was "dots" (positive DC) and the second finger keyed the "dashes" (negative DC). In later years all transmission was by perforated tape (keyboard).

## CENSORSHIP AT WORK!

STANDARD TIME INDICATED	
RECEIVED AT	
381 NEW YORK AVE. HUNTINGTON, N. Y. Tel. Huntington 1064	
TELEPHONE YOUR TELEGRAMS TO POSTAL TELEGRAPH	

LB99N 12/11 IMP=SANSORIGINE MARINE 28 NIL LC  
RUTH DENEUF=  
:COLDSPRINGHARBOR NEWYORK)=

ALL WELL MUCH LOVE=

:DONALD DENEUF.

Censorship at work! In WW2 in the USN I went to Australia in 1942 on a special assignment concerning telecommunications. In the midst of Pacific Island hopping I found myself involved in the air search for Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker (famous WW1 fighter pilot who became president of Eastern Airlines). His plane had ditched somewhere in the Pacific (actually it was Southwest of Canton Island). The military made only a brief statement to the press that he was "lost on a flight in the Pacific". (Years later Capt. Eddie presented me with a personally autographed copy of his book "Seven Came Back".

My wife, not having had nay word from me began to worry that I too was on the same plane. Upon my arrival in Australia I "sent my wife a message" which was delivered to her in the form shown above. "SANS ORIGINE MARINE" of course not only indicated that the office of origin was not disclosed, but the "MARINE" was a real censorship dodge.....I filed the "canned message" at a cable office in Brisbane. At least she found that I was alive - some where, and October 28th was my birthday!

Those were tough days when there was often no circuit time for days on end available to transmit the thousands of "EFM" soldiers' messages to families back home.....every available channel was loaded with military priority traffic. The operators would punch up the EFMs OK but would have to roll up the tape and ship it by boat to the distant point in mail pouches. Upon arrival the tape would be run off on printers and delivered to the local addresses by messenger boy in the usual manner. Probably the majority of addressees never knew the message was weeks or months old.

## Destruction of Clyde Liner SS LENAPE

### Fire off Delaware Breakwater - 1925

BY - JOHN C. OCHOCKI 1922

The SS LENAPE (KVL), a passenger ship, also carrying general cargo, owned by the Clyde Steamship Company of New York, left New York November 18, 1925, bound for Charleston, S.C. and Jacksonville, Fla.

Her Master was Captain Charles Deveraux, whose son, Lt. Deveraux, was eventually to become commander at Wake Island in World War II. I met him on two occasions, when he came aboard to visit his father.

Chief Radio officer was George Seeber, with myself as second operator. On that final day, the LENAPE sailed from Pier 45, North River, New York, on her way south, at about 3 p.m. It was a raw, cold overcast day. Winds were from the northeast and we began to experience moderate seas shortly after clearing Scotland Light vessel on a course paralleling the New Jersey shore.

George and I shared the 24-hour watch, six hours on and off, as required by regulations. George had the 6 p.m. to midnight watch and I followed with the midnight to 6 a.m., and so on around the clock.

I was on watch when the ship left the dock and was relieved at 6 p.m. for dinner. Following this I returned to the radioroom which was located about midships on the boat deck, starboard side. Spent an hour there and then went below to our stateroom to get some sleep before my duty at midnight. Shipowners at that time rarely concerned themselves with much in the way of comfort for radiomen. Consequently our stateroom was located two decks below the radioroom, and aft, almost in the steerage, with a room barely eight feet square, just enough for two bunks, closet space and wash basin. An inside room with no ventilation, and rather uncomfortable in warmer climates of the southern end of our trips.

I turned in about 8 p.m., and tired by the usual pre-sailing rush, fell asleep almost immediately.

I jerked awake about 9:30 p.m., sensing the lack of engine vibration, rolling of the ship, and an unnatural quiet which was suddenly broken by a repeated sound of the ship's whistle, indicating an emergency. I rolled out of the bunk and started dressing. The door to the room opened and a quartermaster excitedly informed me that I was wanted in the radioroom. I quickly finished slipping on my shoes minus socks and put my uniform over my pajamas, then my heavy overcoat and grabbed the two lifepreservers in the room. When I stepped out into the corridor I saw the first officer and several of the crew cutting a hole into the deck with axes, with two men standing by with a waterhose. There was no doubt in my mind that we were on fire. I raced topside to the boat deck. On the way I lost both preservers to two women needing them.

Outside on deck it was cold, windy and dark, except for a large area in the stern of the ship which was lit by a fire coming up through the sky lights. To the west I could see shore lights, quite near, which indicated that we were close inshore of our route. The lights were those of Atlantic City, or one of the many shore resort towns.

In the radioroom George was working coast stations and ships, one of them the Coast Guard Cutter KICKAPOO KITX. Shortly thereafter a message came through from the Clyde Line instructing Capt. Deveraux to proceed toward the Delaware Breakwater and the town of Lewes and beach the LENAPE inside the breakwater there. By this time the ship was pounding full speed for her final destination.

The decks were full of passengers standing by the lifeboats and crewmen stripping off lifeboat covers, and then loading passengers preparatory to swinging the boats out.

By this time the ship was developing a definite list to port, no doubt due to the amount of water being pumped into her tween-decks to put out the fire. We carried many of the passengers' cars aboard and I felt that perhaps the fire originally started in that part of the ship.



JOHN G. OCHOCKI

The cars contained a minimal amount of gasoline in their tanks for the purpose of getting them on the ship and then off the dock on arrival.

As the fire aft flared up the noise level on deck increased. The speaking tube to the bridge squealed. It was the captain calling for George to come to the bridge. I took over the radio watch to continue communication. A blast of seawater sprayed into the radioroom from one of the firehoses being used on deck. To avoid another wetting, I slammed the door to keep things dry. During a break in communications I pulled my license off the bulkhead and also unscrewed a fine Navy clock from the wall. Somehow I felt that it would not be of much further use on the ship. The license went into the breastpocket of my pajamas for safekeeping. The clock, with some tubes, went into a small black leather bag that we used for tools. I hoped somehow to take these with me if possible when I left the ship. It did not appear that we were winning the fight with fire. A short while later, a lessening in the roll and pitch of the ship indicated that we had entered an area of shoal water in the lee of the breakwater at Lewes, Delaware. This was followed some time later by a nudge into my stomach by the edge of the table. We had gone aground.

The speaking tube squealed again, and I was told to "get the hell out of there." I signed off the air, wrapped the phones around my neck under my coat collar, grabbed the black bag with my "salvage" and tried to open the door. It stuck. The heavy accumulation of paint had tightened the fit between the door and the frame. This, plus a soaking with water had jammed it shut. It took a battering with a chair to finally punch it open. By this time there was a smell of burning paint. The paint on the wooden bulkhead behind the spark transmitter was beginning to bubble.

When I finally stepped outside, we were definitely aground with the Coast Guard cutter KICKAPOO and other rescue vessels (tugs) around us. There was plenty of light supplied by the blazing afterdeck. There was a sudden explosion when the after part of the boat deck flared up with a blast, throwing deck chairs and other flaming debris around and overboard.

I ran forward toward the bridge and met Capt. Deveraux and George. All deck lights were out indicating that most of the electric lines inside of that portion of the ship were burned through. Boats were being lowered, mostly on the port side of the ship as there seemed to be some difficulty with those on the starboard side, due to the list of the ship to port. The three of us started down toward the port side of the bridge, where a Jacobs ladder had apparently been rigged for the captain. I was last in line and saw the captain and then George disappear over the rail. In the dark, as I approached the ladder my feet caught in the tangle of some wire flag halyard and I went down. By the time I freed myself the others were gone, and when I got to the rail of the bridge I saw the captain and George pulling away in a lifeboat. Apparently in their haste, I had

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# SOS SOS Help! FIRE

been forgotten. I yelled but could not make myself heard over the wind and general noise of confusion. Also, by this time, flames were roaring out of the ports below me so that my escape in that direction was cut off. I further realized that I was alone on the ship and had to quickly find another avenue of escape. I ran up to the starboard side of the bridge, then down to the boat deck, and the position where the number one boat had been located. This has been launched earlier at the grounding and the "fall" were hanging free. Despite a good eight foot jump into space, it offered the only immediate escape. At that point I had no life preserver, and jumped back into the wheelhouse where I found one in a rack over the wheel and donned it. I then tied my "spoils" bag onto my coat belt, stuffed my phones and hat inside my coat, walked to the edge of the deck and jumped for the rope lifts hanging out over the water. With the four lines running through the block, I made it in good shape. However, the sudden shock of landing on the roped broke my belt loose, and my black bag with "goodies" fell into the water.

I continued down the falls, going by several open ports shooting flames which had started the ropes smoking in several places as I passed. Halfway down I spotted one lifeboat still close by pulling away from the ship. I yelled and was able to get the attention of the officer in charge. After a short delay it finally turned and headed toward me. About half way down, I heard people in the boat yelling for me to jump and looking up I saw that some of the boat falls were afire. With that I slid down to what I judged to be a safe distance from the water and jumped, falling practically alongside of the ship. I reached out and grabbed one of the plate seams. The cold water, and life preserver sliding up and hitting me in the face, was a shock. I heard the bow of the lifeboat bump against the side of the ship and someone grabbed me by the coat collar and helped me over the bow of the boat. I sat on the bow, facing aft, and felt water sloshing around inside of the lifeboat.

We headed back for the KICKAPOO, the Coast Guard rescue ship. The lifeboat was badly overloaded, and the water inside seemed to be rising all the time. We were glad to get alongside of the cutter's gangway.

Coastguardsmen at the foot of the gangway helped us up and guided us to engine room gratings where we managed to dry out and warm up. A welcome round of coffee was passed around and that helped considerably. After spending some time collecting other boats, we headed for the docks at Lewes, Delaware, where we stepped ashore just about sunup. Most of the crew with Capt. Deveraux collected at the head of the dock, where, silhouetted against the rising sun, we watched enormous flames consuming the LENAPE about a half mile away. It was an emotional moment, with tears in the eyes of many of the crew...a sad moment watching your ship dying.

About 9 a.m. that morning after the usual headcheck to make sure no one had been left aboard the ship, we were bussed over to the local railroad station where passengers were given the choice of continuing to Florida by train, or returning to New York. As I lived in Philadelphia at the time, I went north to detrain at North Philadelphia.

The train ride in itself was an experience. Someone had managed to round up some ancient passenger cars that were cold and breezy. The day was clear but it was November and cold. As I remember it we had no water and the two sandwiches I had given me were both bad. Some of the passengers complained but most of them were very tired and sleepy after their ordeal, and curled up in the hard seats and slept. After wandering around several lines in Pennsylvania and being shunted around for other trains, we arrived in North Philadelphia about 9 p.m. that night. Cold, hungry and just about exhausted, I persuaded a taxi driver to take me home on the basis of my life preserver which I managed

to keep, my uniform and, of course, I saw papers on the news stand in the railroad station with the news and picture of the fire. Having no money with me, I promised to pay him on my arrival home. Apparently he felt sympathetic for he didn't wait for his fare when I got home.

On this last trip, the LENAPE carried a total of 367 passengers, and crew. Only one life was lost, that of Robert Leverton, of Williamansett, Mass. To the best of recollection, he was one of the engine crew, and the only story I heard was that he appeared on deck with his clothes afire, probably from an oil explosion belowdecks. He jumped over the starboard side, but not far enough out to clear the side of the ship and was killed when his head struck the hull of the ship.

S.S. Lenape KLV



## Submerged object sinks SS Marine Electric

PORTSMOUTH, VA. (AP) - Divers who examined the coal ship MARINE ELECTRIC, which sank off the Virginia coast and killed 31 crewmen, said Saturday they found the coal carrier upside down with a large hole in its starboard side.

The divers, employed by the ship's owner, Marine Transport Lines, testified before a five-member board meeting here to determine the cause of the tragedy.

Their testimony supported the Company's view that the MARINE ELECTRIC struck bottom or a submerged object before capsizing and sinking in a storm Feb. 12.

Only three of the ship's 34 crewmembers survived the sinking, and they have testified that hatch covers on the 39-year-old vessel were defective and allowed water to get into the cargo, making the ship top-heavy.

- Nevada State Journal, 27 March 1983  
(Clip by Charlie Krause - 1412-V;  
Box 2557, Downtown PO, Reno  
NV 98505).

## An "African Triangle" ?

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I am enclosing cuttings which may interest you. I am sure you know the SS WARATAH disappeared without a trace in the vicinity of East London.\* The latest news is that Emlyn Brown, 28-year-old Cape Town filmmaker, says the ship may be buried so deep in sand that recovery may be impossible. However, he says he is sure he has discovered the wreck of a South African Airways Viscount aircraft which, a few years ago disappeared without trace whilst on final approach to East London Airport.

That area is very similar to the Bermuda Triangle!!! Terrific storms blow up and they have freak waves called "hundred-year waves." I think that both the WARATAH and the Viscount were engulfed by one of these waves.

South African Airways dispensed with wireless operators many years ago. Some were absorbed as navigators and others as ground communicators.

\*East London is on the southeast coast of Cape of Good Hope Province, Union of South Africa (Ed.)

-Best wishes,  
Gordon Wells  
170A Suld St.  
Pietersburg, TVL 0700  
S. Africa





# Jungle Wireless Station

By PHILIP J. VOGEL

**T**he high class travel as "Marconi" Officer on transatlantic and Mediterranean Luxury Liners, back in 1910 became tiresome. Fed up with boiled shirts under Tuxedo or Prince Albert uniform for the weekly "Captain's Dinners" and other social functions I decided to make a change for better or for worse.

The British Marconi Company had just completed the creation of two 75 KW Stations for the Brazilian government, the location of these stations being one at Manaus, the other at Porto Velho from about 500 miles to 2000 miles, respectively, inland from Para on the Atlantic coast. These stations were to handle all correspondence for the Madeira-Mamore Railroad, then under construction by American contractors for the Brazilian Government. The line was to be run from Porto Velho on the Madeira River (a tributary of the mighty Amazon) to a point near Riberalta in Bolivia, a distance of some 300-380 miles. The purpose of the railroad was, primarily, the transportation of raw rubber from the jungles of the hinterland to Porto Velho, thence by stern-wheeler to Manaus and finally to the port of Para. The trip from Riberalta to Porto Velho would consume two days in comparison with the old method of transportation by man-power operated, 10-ton bateaux (boats) which on the average consumed 90 days, and sometimes these boats never reached their destination having foundered in the dangerous rapids of these uncharted inland jungle rivers.

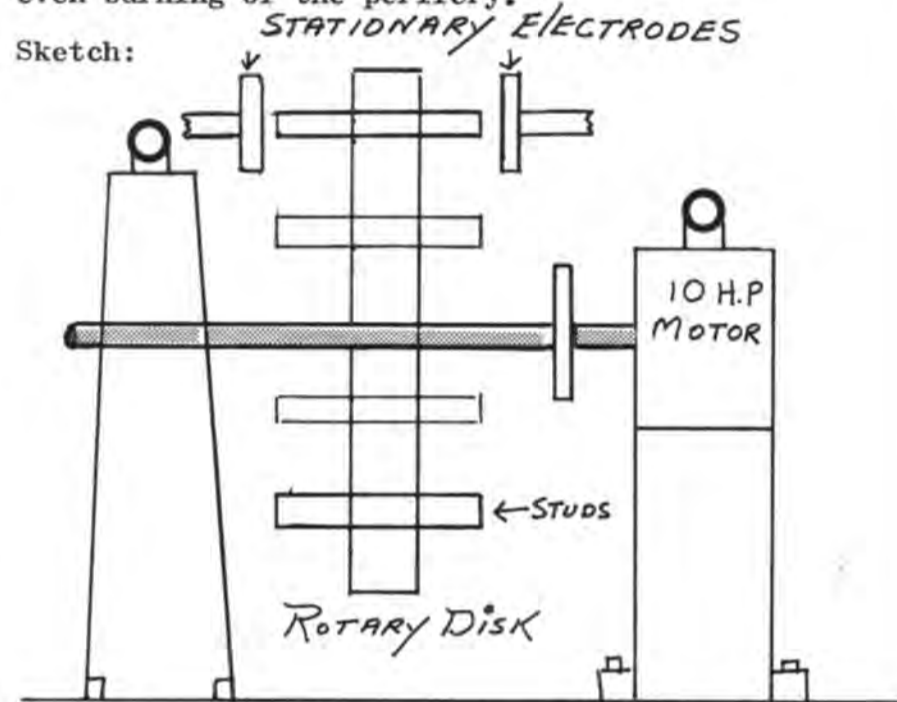
Now we know the reasons and purpose of these two jungle wireless stations so I'll tell you how I got to be one of the staff. The Madeira-Mamore R.R. Co. sent circular letters to vessels in the port of New York offering jobs for engineers, riggers, carpenters, wireless operators, etc., at wages about four times as high as those then prevailing in the State of New York. The proposition had some fascination for me. I hiked down to Broad Street, filed my application, was given a sending and receiving test in a Western Union office and a physical examination. Rail transportation was furnished to Philadelphia and the steamship ticket to Brazil upon arrival there.

It was a hot end of May or beginning June day in 1911 when, with a half dozen other applicants we sailed aboard the freighter "Hubert" of the Booth Line. Those ships were typically "Limie," accommodated twelve passengers of NO-CLASS, the cabins being small, not too clean and the grub . . . well, not at all like on the transatlantic liners. We reached Para at the mouth of the Amazon 12 days after our departure from Philly, transferred to a River Boat to Itacoatiara, stayed there over night in barracks and started on our long trek up the Amazon and Madeira Rivers arriving at Porto Velho two weeks after having sailed from Para. This trip is a "Green Hell;" no fresh water, no fresh vegetables, no fresh milk but fresh meat, yes, very fresh meat because the cattle were butchered nightly in the 'tween decks. Stops were made nightly only and for the sole purpose to drop some negro corpses over the side in shallow water so they would disappear in the green muck and slime if no crocodiles happened to be around. It was surprising how white people had more resistance to tropical diseases than the West Indian Negro. We had stopped five nights during the fourteen-day voyage.

At last Porto Velho; a railroad construction town, in the midst of the jungle, employing about 1500 people. The four wireless masts, 220 ft. each, stand on a little rise cleared of trees and brush. Under the aerial, comprising about 7 miles of wire, rested the transmitting station, the receiving shack, a storehouse and quarters accommodating four people. In a lean-to, there was a galley and quarters for a Chinese cook and a Negro houseboy.

The "power house" is built of corrugated iron over steel U-beams. It contains:

2 - 100 HP reciprocating steam engines coupled by belt drive to 2 units of DC and AC generators of 110 V and 220 V, 75 KW capacity each. The two power units could be synchronized to supply 150 KW—but we had so many breakdowns that we felt we should use only one unit at a time so as to have a spare ready in an emergency. The transmitter proper consisted of a 10 HP Rotor Spark Gap (non-synchronous) with a note of about 240 Cycles (trumpet). The Disc of the Rotor is steel about 2-1/2 ft. diameter by 1 inch thick, coupled to the 10 HP electric motor at ca. 1200 RPM. The rotary electrodes are copper studs ca. 3/4 in. diam. by 2 in. long mounted and secured to the disc by holes and lock nuts. Two slowly rotating bronze drums served as stationary electrodes, the slow rotation causing even burning of the periphery.



As primary condenser the old style "glass plate and tin foil in oil" capacitors are used. The containers are stone crocks about 18 in. high by 24 in. long by 8 in. wide. They are shunted in parallel, 4 banks of about 30 crocks each. Quite frequently these condensers would puncture, blowing out a whole bank at once, so you make yourself a mental picture of the mess created by heavy oil, broken glass and torn sheets of tinfoil spattered over apparatus, walls and even the ceiling some 60 ft. above. The noise produced by such blow outs did easily rival the report of a 3 in. gun.

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## Early Wireless on the Amazon Vogel

The good old Inductance Coils are something to write about. The primary "cable," about the diameter of a man's lower arm, was wound (horizontally) around a wooden form resting on heavy insulators. No, it would not fit into a modern ship radio shack even with the sleeping quarters and WC thrown in. The secondary "cable" is suspended from the roof by block and tackle. It is only slightly smaller than the primary. To tune to resonance two of us would hang onto the tackle, raise or lower at a signal by a third man watching the needle of the Radiation Meter for maximum deflection. What "beefs" have stevedores?! The wave lengths are 1800 Meters for the Manaus Station, 2200 Meters for the Porto Velho station. What's this frequency in KCS? To prevent burning up the contacts of the relay transmitter key two 3 HP Motor Blowers extinguish the arc. The draft is from below upward--two mighty flames appear during transmission shooting towards the sky as those in an iron foundry. The noise produced by the steam engine, the hum of the DC and AC generators, the roar of the Spark in the rotary gap make conversation in the "power house" (I told you before--very "resonant" corrugated iron) impossible. Any talk went via Buzzer mounted on the desk also one in the "Receiving Shack" some 150-200 ft. distant.

Often I wonder if the Smithsonian Institute houses such relics as we used then as receivers and detectors. Yes, you guessed it--I say, (old chap), it is a set of "Fleming Valves." If ever there was a bum detector it is the 2 Element Vacuum Tube. What it amplified the most was static, and with Frank Hemingway, I say, "when I say Static, I mean Tropical Static," not of tropical waters either (that is bearable) but of thousands of miles of tropical virgin forest! To make matters worse, our Marconi Radio Engineer was no operator, yet he insisted that sigs would come loudest the way he set the dials and potentiometer. More than once I walked out of the Shack when he came in to "tune in Manaus" for me. Otherwise a swell chap, he did not know an "E" from a "Q" in code.

The Tuner is not so bad--a mahogany box with the necessary coils and couplings and sliding condensers (no, no discs then) just "Push-Pull" and I don't mean Amplification!

We had one Steam Engineer, several Negro Firemen, Oilers, and Riggers, one Radio Engineer and three Operators. As a rule we worked from 8 to noon and from 3 to 6 p.m. Sometimes a night shift. One operator would send and receive during the morning, the other two would stand watch in the Transmitter house. In the afternoon we would switch around. Traffic consisted mostly of business correspondence English and Portuguese. The latter, sent by Government Officials, consisted often of 300-800 words per message which, in English, could have been condensed to 1/3 without sacrificing any meaning. Those pompous "Senhors" wrote "messages" like we would write a law or a love letter, nothing was ever omitted from the "Most Illustrious Senhor Antonio Rafaelo, Ignazio, Saint Marie Esperanza, Knight of the Order of Chimpanzees, Jefe Politico, of the illustrious Sovereign State of Matto Grosso, Rio de Janeiro, Estados Unidos do Brasil" (this is the address!).

"We remain, Dear Sir and Brother Knight, with our most sincere expressions of our highest esteem, your most humble and respectful servants,. Sig. (4 to 6 names, 4 to 6 titles)".

Not quite as funny was the daily transmission of the Obituary. This list included daily from 4 to 12 to 18 names of Whites (only) that had succumbed to tropical diseases. In Manaus the list of names was given to the various consulates to inform relatives in America, Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, of the deaths of fathers, sons, brothers, sweethearts. Everything was done to prevent this harvest. Sewer Systems were installed, stagnant waters were sprayed with oil and disinfectants, houses were carefully screened, beds covered with netting, garbage properly disposed of. Toward the end of my stay (14 months) some improvements resulted, but my own reason for leaving was a dose of malaria cutting down my avoirdupois about two score pounds.

The grub was excellent, especially for us on "Wireless Hill." Having the right to requisition what we preferred in the line of eats, and having our own cook and galley, we received fine fresh meats, vegetables and fruits, and had our cook prepare them to our tastes. Our living quarters were comfortable, each had a room for his own use and a common

dining room. A wide screened-in porch surrounded the house; at one end there were two showers, hot and cold water, wash stands, etc. Except for tobacco or drinks or an occasional piece of clothing we had no expenses. One could easily save 9/10 of his salary and still not lack anything. Of course there are always those who gamble and return home broke. An exception was a locomotive engineer who made around \$3,500--in a poker game shortly after his arrival and he promptly left for home! Use one nickel only in a one-armed bandit. If it pays off quit, if it doesn't, quit! But, thank goodness, one armed bandits are now taboo.

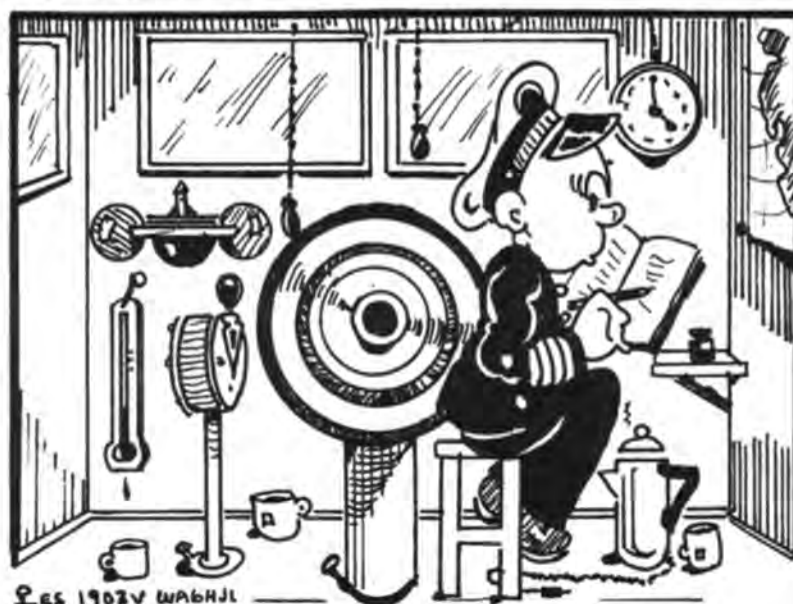
Sundays, if not watching the Baseball and Tennis Sports, we would go hunting in the jungle, well marking our way so we would find our way back. Wild life is abundant. The fiercest of the beasts are the Jaguar and the Boa Constrictor, there are ocelots, wild pigs, scores of types of apes and monkeys, parrots, parakeets, hawks, buzzards. These are not to be feared as they will give humans a wide berth unless cornered. It is the poison insects which make life miserable, such as tarantulas, scorpions, centipedes, spiders, mosquitoes, flies, bugs and, in the water, the crocodiles, poison turtles, electric eels, and that tiny fish that will attack you by the thousands and devour you almost alive, the Piranha. As for the Savages, the Indians, in those parts of the Amazon Region one can only feel pity. They are not warlike though they are experts in the use of bow and arrow which they use for hunting only. Toward the white man they are friendly. They are so primitive that clothes are none of their bother. River bank mud and clay are used to smear their entire body thus making mosquito bites ineffective. Bark canoes are their means of transportation.

As the luxury life on board liners, so does the tropical life in the jungle finally get on your nerve. My bad case of malaria helped much in my decision to return to the temperate zone. So, in September 1912, I embarked for dear old New York. There for a while I operated the Telefunken Station WNT on West Street, then in 1914 I joined the American-Hawaiian Steamship Co., first as Radio Operator and in 1915 as Radio Supervisor. On January 1, 1949, I retired, content to have done my very interesting work for nearly 45 years and having stilled that Wanderlust that invades the heart of so many youngsters.

It is the compensation for us older boys to look back over the years and to find satisfaction in the manner "radio" and the science of electronics have advanced in a comparatively short period of a quarter century. From the Spark Gap and the coherer in 1905, from the rotary gap, the quenched spark, the arc and the Fleming Valve, the crude tuners, the magnetic detector, and the various crystals, a decade later, to the modern highly efficient Vacuum Tube transmitter and receiver, radio compass, radar, broadcast FM and TV just to mention a few, is an achievement unsurpassed in any other science or art.

Like the great buildings of Herculaneum and Pompeii the "Wireless Towers", the "Power House", et al at Porto Velho are now ruin, dust and rubble and a little man with a walky-talky strapped to his back could well communicate with Manaus, a distance which we had difficulty to bridge with a 75 KW power Transmitter only a few short years ago.

## LOG ENTRIES!



LES 1902V WABHJL



## THUMBNAIL RECOLLECTIONS OF A RADIO OPERATOR

By Milton Roth 4090-P

### Logging a Decade of Adventure & Experiences

1929 Charles L. O'Conner: A coastwise collier. Sent first commercial departure message to WNY July 4th. Most all crew drunk while loading in Newport News or Norfolk, some usually left behind. Had to act as helmsman until deckhand could take over. Spark Xmtr.

1929 Lillian: A general freighter, ran coastwise and Puerto Rico. Was originally equipped with a Fessenden spark Xmtr. which used Lyden jars for capacitors. Ship was "modernized" while assigned, with installation of a Navy 1 KW spark. Saw movie of Lillian sinking during world war II.

1930 John R. Williams: A large ocean going tug equipped with a 200 watt (RCA-3627A) transmitter which used a UV211 as oscillator and two UV211's as PA. In towing a dredge and barge in middle of winter from Wilmington Del. to NY, ran into a NE storm which covered tug with heavy coat of ice. Had to knock ice from antenna with long pole in order to obtain bearings from CG stations.

1930 Eastern Glade: Jr. Opr. on cargo/passenger ship on run from NY to South and East Africa. Equipped with only a Federal arc transmitter employing the back shunt keying circuit. Had to be careful not to turn on the alcohol prior to striking the arc, otherwise cover of arc chamber would blow and scare the hell out of you. Worked 5 to 6 thousand miles on long wave, but performed poorly on 500 KC. Bosh killed when cargo sling broke while at Cape Town. Thirty days at anchor loading chromium ore at Beira crew traded clothing to natives on barges in exchange for marijuana, crew had "party", broke into ship stores and stole cigarettes, one of crew also cut in knife fight. Henry Kutchta, a "NY East Side Kid", handy with his fists, and a hellofa nice guy, was the Chief Opr.

1930 Coamo: Largest passenger ship on run between NY and San Juan; equipped with Navy Spark and Federal Arc transmitters. On the trip after leaving, ship ran into hurricane between San Juan and Santo Domingo and an SOS was sent out but ship did not sink. Art Houtari, a West Coast boy, whom I later saw in a movie as radio operator, was one of the radio gang. He had real talent with art sketches.

1930 American Merchant: Passenger/cargo carrier on run to Germany. Believe this ship had an RCA "converted" spark transmitter which had two UV-204-A radiotrons with full-wave rectification which emitted a 500 cycle modulated note. Left ship in NY and flew to Washington on the Ludington airline (every hour on the hour daytime only). Obtained FCC First Class Telegraph license with radiotelephone endorsement.

1930/32 Gulfhawk: Nice clean tanker, ran between Phila. or NY, to Las Piedras, Venezuela. Equipped with RCA ET-3626A MOPA transmitter that used UV-211's, one as Osc and six in the PA. When the Captain's son and two of his son's buddies graduated from the merchant marine schoolship Annapolis, they were employed as quartermasters. In later years they became Captains. Two became Port Captains and then Company Officials. Still correspond with Capt. Charles Glenwright, retired in Port Arthur, Texas.

1932/35 Gulfpride: Reputed to have been worlds largest tanker. Ran between Phila, or NY, and Port Arthur, Texas. Equipped with ET-3626A. The Operators at WPA were outstanding for their ability to copy through heavy static prevalent on the Gulf coast. One of the WPA crew was named Budackie. He had a large family and once said that every time he hung his pants on the bedpost his wife became pregnant. The ship's captain, Oscar Anderson, was a fine type of "Old Man". He let me borrow his car for dates in PA. Was in two hurricanes, one in which the lifeboats were smashed by the waves. During one trip, the general alarm was sounded at night when flames shot high in the air from one of the tanks holding crude oil. After the flames were extinguished with foam, and while the Captain was inves-

tigating the cause of the fire, one of the seamen said he had better be locked up otherwise he was going to blow up the ship. It seems he had an obsession that members of the crew were going to do him harm, and if he was going to "go" so would the rest of the crew. Seems he first tried to set fire to a tank on the windward side of the ship which held aviation gasoline, but fortunately the wind blew out his matches. While on Gulfpride took the CREI correspondence course and departed ship with an offer of work in the Electrical Dept. of Gulf at Port Arthur.

1936 Station KARK Little Rock, Ark. While driving down to Port Arthur stopped to visit KARK. It seems they were in need of a licensed operator who could also copy press on a "mill" and hand it to the announcer for broadcast. Filled the job for almost a year though nearly lost life. In process of standing transmitter watch late in the evening while a remote broadcast of wrestling was in progress, decided to clean face of "composite" home brew type of transmitter. Was not aware of "short" on metal case of meter that carried 2600 volts. Didn't know what hit me, but next thing I remember was waking up on the floor of the transmitter booth, hearing the maids, who had been cleaning up the adjacent studio, screaming. I was unable to move or speak. Though my past life flashed before me and thought I was going to visit my maker, the Supreme Being decided to give me another chance, and, though dazed for awhile, gradually regained my senses. Left burnt skin on the transmitter as I fell and scars on my hand as a reminder of that experience. When a message was received from the 4th Air Navigation District at Fort Worth asking "would you accept if offered", answered "yes", ended my short career in Broadcasting, and started thirty years of enjoyable work assignments with the FAA.

1937 Assigned as Jr. Radio Op. to El Morro, N.M. Airway Station on a point-to-point cw circuit that tied into landlines at Albuquerque. -As a new operator, not too familiar with weather symbol abbreviations, the old time "hot" ops would try and "snow" me with their speedy "bugs". One of the good code men was Irwin Stentz, now a "silent key". The days of "brass pounding" ended with a promotion and transfer to Little Rock, Ark. where proficiency on a teletype was more important than code.

### Shades of Watergate

Most of us, who went down to the sea in ships, as "Sparks" before Big Brawl #1, weren't completely honest in our operations. Mr. Marconi's shore staff warned us, in no uncertain terms, that we must not use any wireless gear not provided by the Company. Patents, etc., were given as the reason.

Our Marconi receivers were rugged, built primarily for wear resistance. With their Carborundum or clock-work magnetic detectors they lacked sensitivity.

The majority of us had been "Hams" and knew that silicon, galena, or perikon detectors were better than the more staple carborundum or magnetic types. For efficiency's sake I, and most of my fellow operators, had, in our shack, a home-made crystal receiver that we used when at sea, and hid under a bunk when the inspector came aboard, in port.

Some of us carried our own head-sets. For some time I had a Holtzer-Cabot set, with leather band and later a set of those wonderful Baldwins, with their mica diaphragms.

After all, there were no Unions to rule us. Mr. Marconi paid us \$25 a month and we wanted to turn out an efficient job on 600 meters. We got results. So what if we fudged a little.






## Memories of the Past

# The Day of The Steam Schooner

By LEE FASSETT

It was on February 14, 1916 that we left the dock in San Francisco on the Steamschooner "Alliance" for Santa Rosalia, Mexico, located on the lower California peninsula, and other Central American ports. The vessel was operated by THE CALIFORNIA SOUTH SEA NAVIGATION COMPANY, and by order to the Captain the trip was not to exceed sixty days.

As a background of these small vessels, steamschooners were primarily designed and used for transporting lumber from northern California, Oregon and Washington to San Francisco, San Pedro, and San Diego, California. Most of these vessels were built of wood, and had accommodations for a few passengers.

If during any old timers career as a wireless operator, never having sailed aboard one of these vessels he has just NEVER LIVED. Sailing north during the winter months, or in any kind of storm, on one of these unloaded BATH TUBS is an experience never to be forgotten. They could do the highland flying, corkscrew turn, wiggle, shimmi, slide, and then give a twist that would chatter your teeth, all at the same time. I still contend that if we hadn't the steam schooners, that the fish in the ocean would have starved to death, if you know what I mean.

For a vessel of this kind to go into the tropical heat of lower California and Central American ports was unusual and certainly a new experience for those of us on the Alliance.

First, it must be remembered that the steam schooner made short trips, usually only three or four days at the most, coastwise, therefore no facilities had been provided for taking a bath, either by shower or tub. Under these circumstances the only alternative was, you guessed it, a bucket.

Tropical heat being what it is can make the best natured person miserable, but when you possess a fan you purchased at your own expense and can't use it in the most confined space man could devise, then you have misery at its zenith. Why? Because the ship had only one generator which was only put in operation during the night.

The Fair Weather vessel arrived at Santa Rosalia February 24th where we met "Everett" who had been wireless operator on a ship called the KORIGAN III. The ship came under attack while in the harbor of Santa Rosalia by the Carranza government forces and was confiscated, however not until Everett had removed all the wireless equipment.

Having acquired the wireless equipment, the BOLEO MINING COMPANY with its large smelter facilities, hired Everett to set the equipment up in a radio cabin they provided, and the necessary poles for the antenna high up on a hill overlooking the whole area of Santa Rosalia. For this he was paid \$120 per month with room and board.

After completing the installation, and a great deal of hit and miss testing without a wavemeter to obtain the six hundred meters he needed to communicate, he finally made contact with K.P.H. in San Francisco using the call letters X.B.F.

It might be of interest to know that a fresh water tank serving the water needs for the company was in close proximity to the station, so in one hundred and ten degree heat, guess what? Did I need that swim.

Continuing our voyage south, it was on March 7, 1916 that we arrived at Salina Cruz, Mexico where we went along side one of the finest of docks, and to find that another vessel of THE CALIFORNIA NAVIGATION COMPANY was there called the George W. Elder.

Going aboard the Elder it was found that they had a bath tub, and for the sum of twenty five cents I got a much needed bath.

## Typical Steam Schooners Loaded Southbound, Ballast North.



Steamschooner FAIRHAVEN. Southbound from Puget Sound with a load of lumber of San Francisco. The Fairhaven was built in North Bend, Oregon - Reg. 750 tons. She foundered at sea on a trip to Mexico in 1922. Picture furnished by Joe D. Williamson. The Fairhaven was typical of small boats that could duck in and out of small harbors.



STEAMSCHOONER "YOSEMITE"

This 827 ton steamschooner was built in 1906 by Bendixsen. She was one of the McCormick Steamship Company's boats. The Yosemite was stranded at Point Reyes in 1936. Circa 1916 the Yosemite's call letters were "WQY" and she was sailing for the Yosemite Steamship Company. Later her call seems to have been changed to KDWE at which time she sailed for Pope & Talbot. The ship was called ... "Flagship of the Snoose-Chewer's Fleet" at one time and was commanded by Captain Asplund for many years. He was remembered as a very short little fellow who could hardly climb to the bridge, cut certainly a capable skipper. This picture from the Washington State Historical Society and furnished by late member Dexter S. Bartlett.

## Richard Johnstone of Station - KPH

**BY HENRY W. DICKOW**

Some of the old wire and wireless telegraphers were ambidextrous; they could telegraph with the right hand and write with a pencil held in the left. They could converse and telegraph at one and the same time. They could copy as fast as the "stuff" came over the wire or into their headphones. Richard (Dick) Johnstone of station KPH near the San Francisco county line was one of them. His identification signal or sine was RJ. He was a phenomenon of the ether, one of the best telegraphers of the day.

Station KPH was the goal, the promised land, of scores of commercial telegraphers, but only a scant few of them ever reached this destination. Assignment to the station called for a better than average mastery of two codes - Morse for the land-line, and Continental for the wireless, together with accuracy, reliability, patience, and a goodly measure of intestinal fortitude, or just plain guts. It was a nerve-wracking job. There were no idle moments during any eight-hour watch. Interference from other stations - commercial, navy, army, and particularly the amateurs, was terrific. To cope with the amateur problem required tact in the early days when there were no governmental regulations to restrain them. The air was free to all. Wavelengths were chosen at random and the amount of power used for transmitting was determined by the financial status of the station operator and owner.

Station KPH was ideally situated atop a high hill overlooking the Central Pacific Ocean. Because of its strategic location it was often possible to make and break records for long-distance communication.

Dick Johnstone served at KPH before and during World War I. He enlisted as a radioman in the U.S. Naval Reserve Force with the rating of Chief Electrician. In World War II, Johnstone again served in the Navy, this time as a Commander.

While at KPH one of his duties consisted of copying scores of position reports or, TRs, from ships at sea. Each night, beginning at 8 p.m. all ships within range would report their positions with respect to San Francisco or other major Pacific Coast ports, and then add a few words about the condition of the weather. These reports would appear the following morning in the Marine News columns of the daily press. The practice has long since been discontinued, to the regret of the many who followed the ship along the way.

Dick Johnstone's popularity at KPH was a result of his personal acquaintance with a majority of the sea-going operators and the members of the local amateur fraternity. He knew most of them by first name, and he could recognize them instantly by their fists - the manner in which they manipulated their telegraph keys. The operators on the large passenger liners were usually better telegraphers than the others. The freighter operators took life in stride, doing only what was necessary to earn their keep at the rate of \$35 to \$40 monthly. The tanker operators, as a whole, were a lazy lot. They developed a type of sending known as the oil-tank swing, a slow, sloppy style with the consistency of the heavy oil which slushed about in the tanks below. Yet the operators aboard the freighters and tankers lived the good life. Sometimes they would send one message per day, sometimes none.

### The Picture Brides

Agonizing hours of duty came to the KPH operators when the Japanese passenger liners, the Maru boats, were a few days out of San Francisco enroute from the Orient. Each of these large ships carried hundreds of Japanese Picture Brides, young maidens who were to be joined in marriage to Japanese swains who had met their intended wives through photographs mailed from the homeland, some of which were not quite representative of what the prospective grooms had bargained for. And although the brides were usually chosen by their parents, the husbands were generally satisfied with their choices.

On each voyage of a Maru boat, the ship's purser would encourage the young brides-to-be to send a wireless message to their intended husbands. The text of these messages was always the same: ARRIVE TUESDAY MEET SHIP. Nothing more, nothing less. The cost of such a message was exorbitant - five dollars. The brides were cajoled into sending them for fear that their intended husbands would not be on the docks to meet them when the steamer arrived. It was a racket and a shakedown, yet it continued through the long years from 1910 to 1916, when the Great War finally brought it to a halt.

The five-dollar message fee was split four ways. The ship's purser took the first dollar, the wireless operator a dollar, the chief operator at the home office fifty cents, and the remaining two-dollars-fifty-cents went into the coffers of the Marconi Co. Often a hundred or more such messages came from each incoming ship, giving the wireless operator a lucrative stipend amounting to more than his entire salary for the voyage.



When the ship arrived in port, the docks would swarm with great crowds of young Japanese men ready to greet their intended brides. It was a sight to behold - filled with pathos and humor. The men, with wireless messages in hand, waving them frantically above their heads, would shout out the names of the girls. The sight was like one never seen before. The expressions on the faces of the little yellow men of Nippon, and those of the chalk-white, black-haired, doll-like maidens in their colorful kimonos, presented a kaleidoscope which, once seen, would never again be forgotten.

Usually the brides arrived flat broke, for the five-dollar fee exacted from them for the cost of the wireless message represented a considerable sum of money in those days...and all of their worldly possessions.

At KPH, preparations were made in advance to receive the heavy volume of picture-bride traffic. The text of the message was typed on stacks of Marconigrams. The number of the message, the check (number of words), date, time of receipt, and the sign of the receiving operator, were all entered in their proper places, requiring only the addition of the address and signature. These stacks of messages were laid alongside the mill, where the operator reached for them in numerical order, and after an hour or two the final message would come in. During this interval, all other traffic on the air came to a halt. Once a Japanese liner began sending, he continued with his traffic until he had cleared his stack.

In his biography, Dick Johnstone tells about the procedure: "Here comes one of my Japanese friends, Nakato, on the S.S. Nippon Maru (Maru means ship).

He says: 'Moishi, moishe, RJ, we have seventy message from pretty picture bride, you take, thank you please JNP.'

I answer: "Matto ato de," in Japanese, and he will wait my call. Some American ship breaks in and says: "What's going on?"

Upon their arrival in San Francisco, the Japanese operators never failed to express their thanks and appreciation to Johnstone with personal calls and gifts of gold fountain pens.

Unlike the bitter resentment displayed by the populace of San Francisco against the members of its local Japanese colony, there was a spirit of genuine camaraderie between the Oriental and American wireless operators. They, too, were bothers under the skin.

The Japanese operators were crack telegraphers, all of them. They were given a far more intensive degree of training than the Americans. They first had to master their own Japanese code, as well as the International Morse, or Continental. They had to speak two languages. And the pay they received was a mere pittance, the equivalent of approximately \$15 US monthly. The call letters of all their ships began with the letter J.

The operators told about the excitement that prevailed on the docks on steamer day when the picture brides disembarked. They told how they hobbled into the arms of their lovers, and how they traveled like cattle in steerage on the long voyage across the Pacific. Long forgotten are the days when the Tenyo Maru, Shinyo Maru, Nippon Maru, and others of the line let down their gangplanks and discharged their human cargoes.

## "RJ" and Tom Lambert Set a World Record

An astounding feat of long-distance communication, never duplicated nor remotely approached, is credited to Johnstone when he succeeded in working across the Pacific with a ship at anchor in Chinese waters and using only a crystal detector for the receiver at KPH. With nothing more than a tuning coil with a single layer of wire, wound around a wooden core, a galena crystal detector, a tiny condenser, and a pair of headphones, Johnstone and Tom Lambert broke the world's record for long-distance communication with crystal detectors.

Tom Lambert was the wireless operator aboard the Standard Oil tanker J.A. Moffett, call-letters WRE, in 1915-1916. She made a scheduled call at Richmond, California, to load a cargo of oil. She proceeded to Panama and then to China. While the ship was at Richmond, Lambert journeyed out to KPH at Hillcrest to arrange a test schedule with Johnstone. The purpose of the test was to determine the effective range of a crystal detector and a 1915-vintage wireless spark transmitter. Identical receivers were to be used aboard the Moffett and at KPH, with the exception that Lambert had a slightly better tuning device, known as a loose coupler, which replaced the older tuning coil.

Arrangements were made between Johnstone and Lambert to send a dot - one single dot - each morning at 2:30. Reception of the dot would be acknowledged first by the Moffett, followed by her position report to KPH. It would have been much easier to send out a long call, but the test was previously made as difficult as possible, by mutual agreement.

Amazingly, the test was successful. The single dot was heard over a distance of more than 5,000 miles across the Pacific. Each morning, without exception, the Moffett heard the dot from KPH, and each morning she gave her position report as earlier agreed. To further complicate the test, Johnstone had agreed to acknowledge receipt of the position report with a single dot of his own, just as Lambert had done when he acknowledged the signal from KPH.

The dots came through with amazing clearness and distinction for the first 4,000 miles, when static interference was encountered and an additional annoyance of signal fading began. In spite of these obstacles, Johnson received the signals by standing on his toes, tightly pressing the headphones to his ears, holding his breath, to memorize the position report from the Moffett. Following this awful suspense, Johnstone would acknowledge the message with a single dot.



# RICHARD 'Dick' JOHNSTONE

This all-time record kept the ship in communication with KPH for almost an entire month, although on her voyage home the signals from the Moffett were not heard until she had first reached a point 3,800 miles from San Francisco. No plausible explanation has ever been advanced for the success of this strange undertaking. It had not been done before and it has never been done since, under like conditions and circumstances. There have been other record-breaking contacts between KPH and ships at sea, but they were not achieved with galena crystals and tuning coils. The late A.W. Peterson, who sent press nightly from KPH, once worked a distance of 6,000 miles with the old rotary spark-gap then used at Hillcrest. This record was established with the S.S. Floridian, WLR, while the vessel was Australia-bound, but she had aboard a more modern wireless spark transmitter of the "quenched" type - and, most of all, an audion tube receiver.

In modern times these distances are commonplace, at almost any hour of the day or night with the newer high-power vacuum-tube transmitters, but Johnstone, Lambert, and Peterson did their work with the spark.

Johnstone did not see Lambert again. He left to accept an assignment with the movie colony in Hollywood, and there he died. But a year earlier, he verified, in writing, the success of the trans-Pacific record-breaking feat, when Johnstone wrote and quizzed him on this score.

Wrote Lambert: "Sure, we cleared over 5,000 miles and I remember that old dot (E). When I wanted you I gave one dot - you would give me back one dot, and another dot when you OK'd the message. If I remember, we cleared each other from the harbor in Panama and then when lying off the Yangtze River in China - and no transmitters or amplifiers. Signed, Tom Lambert, 4/20/62. Route 1, Box 504, Newhall, California.

## Johnstone Introduces "One-Wire Aerial"

Another innovation by Johnstone was his adaptation of the first one-wire aerial ever used on shipboard on the Pacific Coast. For years earlier, ships were equipped with four-wire aerials and fitted with large, cumbersome insulators that required periodic cleaning to remove the soot and salt spray which reduced their insulating properties.

It was always a messy job to lower an antenna on shipboard, especially when a ship had more than two masts, for under these conditions the aerial wires would become entangled with almost everything above deck. It was a laborious job to unsnarl them. Sailing ships like the barkentine E.R. Sterling, and the Union Oil tanker, the sailing ship Erskine M. Phelps, were especially hard to equip with aerials and even harder to service.

Vaseline was smeared over the surface of aerial insulators to improve their qualities, an exhausting undertaking in the tropical heat where the insulators required additional attention. If not properly maintained, they would set fire to the ship's rigging, or to the masts themselves. The powerful wireless spark transmitters of old were vicious offenders. Worst of all, electrical shocks would be experienced by those who came in contact with leaky insulators, such as the sailors at work high up in the yardarms. The ship's rigging, if metal cable were used, was likewise vulnerable.

So the thought occurred to Johnstone that perhaps a means could be devised to dispense with the cumbersome 4-wire aerial and use a single wire instead. Wireless amateurs, the forerunners of many commercial operators, had had considerable success with a single wire. They then discarded their bird-cage aerials and other weird designs, such as the chicken-step spreaders and umbrellas, in favor of the simple, lone wire. Why not a one-wire aerial for shipboard use, Johnstone asked himself. It might not be as good as a four-wire type but it could prove satisfactory in an emergency.

Single-wire antennas had proved themselves adequate as early as 1901 when Marconi used a wire kite-string for his aerial to receive signals across the Atlantic. In San Francisco, amateurs used box kites flown from Twin Peaks in 1908, and to their surprise they worked a station in Portland, Oregon, with only a one-inch spark coil for a transmitter. Best of all, amateur stations on the East Coast were heard in San Francisco with this box-kite aerial.

Johnstone once experimented with a box kite flown from a ship on which he served; the main aerial had been blown down in a storm. With a lead-in wire 300 feet long, communication was conducted over a distance of 1200 miles in the Pacific, while East Coast stations were clearly received.

In 1924, Johnstone was attached to the Marconi Marine Department in San Francisco as District Manager for RCA, equipping and servicing several hundred ships arriving at and departing from San Francisco.

One day a rush call came from Standard Oil at Richmond, California. One of its ships, the Col. E.L. Drake, had lost its aerial. In another two hours she must sail. It would take that long to reach Richmond from San Francisco. So Johnstone ordered a temporary one-wire aerial installed in place of the original four-wire type. The ship had three masts. With an inverted L-bracket on the mainmast, a heavy cable was carried through an insulator from stem to stern. The transmitter was then re-tuned, and the ship was able to communicate all the way up and down the coast without the slightest difficulty. This was the end of many four-wire aerials. Today, most ships use a single wire, but the Col. E.L. Drake had led the way. Her wireless operator was Reuben H. Horn.





# ...OF STATION 'KPH'

## "RJ" Goes to Sea

Have you ever been sea-sick?

Only then will you realize that life can be worse than death. Seasoned mariners have been known to "give up the ghost" or whatever their stomachs contained, when caught in the teeth of a roaring gale, their ships bouncing around like corks.

It happened to Dick Johnstone on his first trip to sea. Being the wireless operator, he could not give up, regardless of his sea-sickness. He alone could send out a distress call for help, if the occasion demanded.

Johnstone served in the old coal-burner Acapulco of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, the very first ship on the Pacific Coast to be equipped with a new type wireless transmitter called a 240-cycle spark set. The receiver used a Fleming Valve, with a Magnetic Detector in reserve.

The Acapulco was the last passenger liner to sail out of San Francisco on August 23, 1912, with but a single wireless operator. On her first day out, the brand new Marconi equipment blew up, doing considerable damage to the ship's dynamo. For several days she was without power for lights or the wireless. Oil lamps were brought into service. "Being only a kid of seventeen," said Johnstone, "I was blamed for the disaster."

"The captain insisted that I copy the nightly press, no matter how sea-sick I might be. He came into the wireless room with a bucket, which he tied between my legs. In this manner I copied the press while seated before my receiver. To this day I don't know how I survived."

## Others Who Worked at KPH

Dick Johnstone's colleagues at KPH were men of great skill and ability. Frank Shaw was one of them. "Pop" Hyde another; also George Hubbard, Haraden Pratt, and A.W. Petersen, to name a few more.

Frank Shaw was the second-trick man, and his 4-to-midnight watch was nerve-racking. Like so many of his fellow operators, he was physically handicapped. One of his eyes failed to track with the other; a humorous but pathetic sight, a condition of which he was extremely conscious. For this reason he worked at night.

His affliction prevented him from copying traffic on the mill - he had to use a pencil instead. And with his long-handled "stick" he wrote them down as fast as they came in.

Each time he finished one message he would throw it over his shoulder and onto the floor, but before doing so he carefully numbered each message in proper sequence. Not until he finished his watch was he able to transfer his handwritten messages to the typewriter, thereby requiring him to remain at his station for several hours after his tour of duty had expired. It was amusing to see him on the floor, on hands and knees, searching for the messages and putting them in chronological order. When a message occupied more than one page, he found himself in real trouble.

Shaw was a teetotaler. In his lunch kit he always carried a bottle of "Iron Brew" - a mild soda-pop drink of the day with a wild-sounding name.

One day the station operators "spiked" his brew with bourbon. Shaw passed out. He did not awaken until 10 a.m. the following morning, never knowing what he had consumed. Those who compounded the joke were compelled to stand his watch.

"Pop" Hyde of KPH was a venerable old codger, liked by all. He bore a striking resemblance to the character on the Quaker Oats carton, with his long white hair and his patriarchal manner. His qualifications as a telegrapher were uncanny. An old Morse wire man, he was unexcelled.

George S. Hubbard once spent an evening with Hyde at the station, all of the time engaging in conversation. At the same time a stream of traffic was coming in from one of the Maru boats. Hyde paid little attention to the Japanese operator, and continued conversing with Hubbard. Suddenly his fingers came to life as he reached for the "mill" - and he furiously typed away - one message after another - putting down on the typewriter what he had received and retained within his memory while conversing. "I have seen men copy behind," said Hubbard, "But never the likes of old Pop Hyde."

Hyde, like other old telegraphers, was a problem drinker. His fellow operators called him a "sincere, earnest, and dedicated imbibor." "And in the long years that I knew him," said Hubbard, "I found him intoxicated but once. I arrived at the station and Pop was gone. I roamed the surrounding cow pasture - and soon found him . . . sleeping serenely, his snowy locks resting on the trusty neck of a cow which was also asleep in the meadow during the small hours of the morning."

\* \* \* \* \*

Story from unpublished book "TALES OF THE WIRELESS PIONEERS" (Book 2 - Telegraphers & Others I have known) by the late Henry W. Dickow, Honorary Member #1 and Member 3-SSGP. Mr. Dickow donated his publications to Bill Breniman before becoming a silent key on April 17, 1971. The 'Ancient Mariner' is publishing them for enjoyment of Society members.



# "I Remember Station WSC"

By Jan Noordegraaf 3442-V

## Memories of long ago by one of our Dutch members

WSC is the call sign of the American Coast Station, Tuckerton New Jersey. It is controlled by R C A, and a rather small station, globally speaking because it takes care of local radio traffic around New York harbour. For greater distances either WCC or WSL are used; two mighty stations on the east coast of the United States, and well known world wide, because of their powerful shortwave networks.

But every time the call sign WSC in Morse is reaching my ear-drums and penetrates into my brains, it not only establishes a translation into plain language and a location. There is more. Something deep inside me starts vibrating; something I cannot quite define.

The world of radio is a closed one, only understandable and attainable for those sworn in to speak and keep the language of Morse.\* Morse is a separate language indeed, a super-esperanto, to which one has to listen very carefully. It is a demanding world language of great power. This is the reason that many "operators" are considered to be absent minded, when they are trying to decode the fading and wavering bursts of Morse, which are meaningless to an outsider.

## Member Noordegraaf's Story—"Disaster of the Vestris"

Maybe radiotelegraphist Michael O'Loughlin of the British steamer VESTRIS also was such a typical member of the ships crew. The VESTRIS had left New York on November 10, 1928, bound for Barbados, Rio and Buenos Aires. The ship was built in 1912 and carried a cargo of six thousand tons of automotive parts, a crew of two hundred and about one-hundred-thirty passengers.

The ship was listing a bit when she left her pier on that cold November day in Hoboken, and O'Loughlin had called WSC as usual, Morsing QTO NY and BARBADOS, now leaving New York, bound for Barbados. Nothing particular in radio-traffic, just according to the regulations and the book.

What did New York mean to him? Just a harbour? And what about WSC? Just another radio station? I don't believe so. Maybe he had friends, relatives or a girl friend intown. Maybe WSC meant "home". In fact, we would need the story of his life, or be able to sense his mood that day. But it is so long ago. A different time and world, almost a different century. . . . Even the old logbook of the ship, if it is still kept in the vaults of Marconi International in England, would not reveal those things - and O'Loughlin is dead.

That strange list had worried some of the crew members already, although they knew the ship had to be trimmed, and water shifted to other tanks. Apparently nothing was wrong.

But through the hours the list increased slowly and although the strong wind abeam could have been responsible for that, it was not a very comforting situation.

At noon the engine was stopped and the vestris remained adrift for a couple of hours, without any explanation, heaving slowly in the heavy swell from the Atlantic.

Soon the rumour circulated that part of the coal in the bunkers had shifted due to the weather, and water was said to be leaking through portholes that could not be closed, because the rubber packing had deteriorated.



S.S. Vestris - MJZ Lost 1928

S.S. VESTRIS - Built in Belfast 1912. Entered the New York - South American route in 1921. Early in the war, it had a narrow brush with the German raider Karlsruhe which destroyed her sister ship the Vandyke. The Vistris was of 10,494 tons and owned by Liverpool, Brazil & River Plate Steam Nav. Company - part of Lamport & Holt line ships.

The Vestris had 200 tons of cargo come aboard after it was down to the 'Winter Deep Load Line'. It had been cited 5 times previous for overloading. The Skipper was the tragic 'sacrificial-scapegoat' who chose to go down with his ship after fighting the odds the owners had stacked against him. W.A.B.



In the evening a couple of tables that had been fixed to the deck, broke loose and disappeared over the side, because of the heavy list.

Next morning the coal bunkers were reported full of water, although the crew had worked desparately to close the coal port on star-board side, that sould have been closed and secured before the ship left Hoboken. However, the passengers were reassured, there was no imminent danger, but during dinner the ship was leaning over so suddenly and alarmingly, that a steward was wounded.

Most passengers managed to reach their cabins, where they, -hanging or laying - tried to pass the time and the weather.

Radiotelegraphist O'Loughlin exchanged a QRU (nothing to report) at about 17.00 hours with the sistership VOLTAIRE, but immediately after, the events developed dramatically.

At 23.00 hours captain CArey finally entered the radio cabin, his face grim and worried.

Here is our position, he said, prepare an SOS message, and wait for the word. It will be soon.

O'Loughlin started his transmitter and waited, until the captain told him that the situation appeared to be less dramatic than he had expected. There was no immediate reason to transmit the SOS message now.

Again the hours slowly passed. A number of passengers had taken to their life jackets and were walking the slanting deck, although the emergency situation had not been confirmed yet. The ship was leaking and the holds were filling with water.

Another daybreak. During the night the crew had been shoveling, pumping, shifting cargo and fighting the increasing list, which was ever thirty degrees now.

O'Loughlin still waited, his eyes filled with sleep, because he had tiringly spent the night in his heaving, uncomfortable chair. At 10.00 hours that morning he finally was allowed to send the message for help.

SOS VESTRIS POSN 37.35 N 71.08 W IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE REQUIRED

(Continued Next Page)



Morse signals were flashing through the air. The outside world came to know that there was a leaking, sinking, capsizing VESTRIS.

The ship was drifting through the heavy seas with starboard side awash, slowly scanting more and turning turtle. A number of ships had received the radio message and changed course immediately, but no one was near enough to arrive in time.

Although the ship was in the vicinity of Cape Hatteras, and well within reach of the normal shipping lines, it could not recover the time passed, and help was hours away.

At 11.30 hours O'Loughlin signalled that boats were being lowered; a simple message that lead to heartbreaking scenes on board the doomed ship, because of many boats turning over, being pushed under by the davits on the low side of the ship, or could not be launched on the other side. A free fight for all; the law of the jungle. Save yourself! Panic, heroism, women drifting away, drowning children, shouting, husbands going under in the cold, exhausting seas.

13.17. - WE CANNOT WAIT ANY LONGER, HAVE TO LEAVE SHIP NOW. SOS!

A story of the sea; cruel but not uncommon so far. A drama that caused the death of more than 120 people, also of the captain and the stubborn Irishman, who did not want or could not leave his small cabin behind the scanting funnel.

13.25. - TAKING TO THE BOATS

Later, the Courts verdict was that the ship could have been saved, if competent and early decisions had been taken. But it was too late now.

A last sign of life in Morse at 13.30: LEAVING SHIP NOW

Then there was nothing but silence. Everyone listening in was waiting for a miracle, but almost sure that they had witnessed the final message of the vessel, now sliding down to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean.

But ten minutes later the breathlessly, impatiently listening insiders on the vast coast of America and the small armada of vessels in the area that came too late for help, were hearing the slow and weakening Morse signals that signed the epitaph of the ship and of O'Loughlin.

This was completely unexpected and dropped right into the deadly radio silence.

Apparently quiet, properly and unmoved, the Irishman keyed: "GOOD BYE TO WSC"

Every time the call sign WSC reaches my eardrums and penetrates into my mind, something uncontrollable is taking hold of me. Fury, inability, incapability, desparation, because death is so unavoidable and cruel and has no mercy in the face of courage.

However, when O'Loughlin signalled his last words, death was overcome by his humor and bravado. Morse language had helped him to reach the shore, the stars and maybe God.

God, in his Perihelion, certainly smiled.

\* International Morse



# The S.S. Vestris Disaster 1928



Courtesy of The News, New York

Launching the port lifeboats of SS. Vestris

## Editorial Comment

Member, Jan Noordegraaf [3442-V] sends this story from his home in the Netherlands. Jan (or John as it translates into English) has sailed on many Dutch ships including the well known Maasdam. John is the Author of about ten Maritime Books - the last one ... "In the wake of Marconi" (all in Dutch language). He is co-editor of three Dutch maritime periodicals, including "De Blauwe Wimpel". His address is: 52 Vliek, 2036 CN Haarlem, Netherlands.

We think you will enjoy John's covering of the sinking of the Vestris. It was noted in researching the call letters that the Vestris had been assigned "MJZ" over the years. However we found one reference, which we could not verify recording it as "HWNK". Perhaps an error or due to change of registry.

The names of the Radio Officers staffing the Vestris on her last voyage included Michael J. O'Laughlin, Chief [Home - Camolin County, Wexford Ireland]; Second Officer James T.F. MacDonald; Third - Charles Verchere. Our late member and historian, Karl Baarslag talked to MacDonald after the Vestris sinking. It was also noted that one of the Society's Charter members, Raymond E. Meyers (89-S-SGP) was Chief of the Naval Radio Compass Station at Bethany Beach. While the Vestris had not yet signaled for help, Ray had noted its lack of progress - knew something was wrong and alerted units of the USCG and Navy. This precaution expedited handling of the emergency as the ship sank. The delay by Captain Carey caused many casualties among the 128 passengers and 198 officers and crewmen who manned the ship.

The Literary Digest called the sinking of the Vestris --"The grimmest tragedy at sea since the Lusitania". Sinking of the Vestris did 'trigger' reforms in the 'loading' of ships and brought about many other safety precautions and standards which had not been observed by the owners and operators of ships in the early days of the sea. Thanks to John for his delightful story. We hope he will be with us again in the near future. W.A.B.

## 25th Anniversary St. Lawrence Seaway



### Lake Log Chips

This year the St. Lawrence Seaway will celebrate its 25th anniversary and a new bi-national symbol has been prepared to mark the event. The international partnership involved in both the construction of the Seaway and today's combined U.S. Canadian operation of the waterway is represented in the symbol which combines an American star with a Canadian maple leaf. The water which flows through the Seaway locks lifting ships from the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Superior, is represented in the symbol by the number 25.

Distinctive fresh-water and ocean and ocean-going vessels reflect the importance of Seaway Shipping.

[ From "Lake Log Chips" - Vol. 12-20. Great Lakes Research, Jerome Library, Bowling Green State Univ. Richard J. Wright - Director. Bowling Green Ohio 43403 ]



FOLLOWING "BOB"GLEASON

# THE EARLY DAYS



# PAN AM IN ALASKA

1942 TO 1944 INCLUSIVE

BY ALMON A. GRAY - 810-P

Bob Gleason's article "Pan Am in Alaska 1931-1942" (Sparks Journal, Sept. '83) gave an excellent account of the PAA communication system in Alaska up to the time Bob went into uniform with the Army. Perhaps Sparks Journal-readers would be interested in knowing what happened to the system after Bob left.

Shortly after the U.S. declared war on Japan, the Navy entered into a contract with PAA whereby the latter agreed to use its facilities, equipment and personnel to augment the newly established Naval Air Transport Service (NATS) in providing airlift for the military establishment. Under terms of the contract the Navy took title to all PAA facilities and equipment with the proviso that at such time as the contract should be terminated, PAA would have the option of taking back any of the assets it desired to retain. The Commander of the West Coast Wing of NATS was assigned the duty of administering the contract as it related to the Alaska and Pacific Divisions of PAA, and as his Communication/Electronics Officer, I had staff cognizance of matters relating to PAA communications.

When the Japanese attacked the Aleutian Islands in June 1942, NATS was ordered to provide airlift to and from Kodiak and Dutch Harbor immediately. At that time NATS had only a handful of aircraft and crews, and had no airways type communications at all north of Vancouver, B.C., therefore we turned to PAA Alaska for help. They at once commenced handling communications with our aircraft and gave us invaluable weather reports from their stations. Their aircraft and crews also commenced flying out the Aleutian chain right along with our Navy-manned aircraft. In those very critical months immediately after the Japanese attack on Alaska PAA provided yeoman service, and as Bob so modestly wrote "were of great assistance in the initial efforts to thwart the Japanese thrust into Alaska"

NATS built up rapidly, and both the Army (AACS) and the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) made rapid progress in establishing integrated airways type communications between the "lower forty-eight" and Alaska, inside Alaska, and out the Aleutians. Consequently when the Aleutian campaign ended it was feasible to terminate the part of the Navy/PAA contract pertaining to the Alaska Division. This was done in early 1944.

PAA exercised its option to take back the facilities and equipment it desired to retain, and it opted NOT to take back the ground radio stations within the territory. Thus the Navy found itself with thirteen radio stations on its hands for which it had no current or foreseeable use. It was not a surprise however, as PAA's Superintendent of Communications, "Chuck" Huntley, had told me informally, it was likely to happen. At about the same time I was advised informally that the CAA in Anchorage was interested in acquiring the stations and in employing the operators, should they become available. This information was passed to my friend, Jimmy Nicholson, then a Captain in the Office of Naval Communications, so when PAA advised us officially of their intentions, it took only a few days to hammer out an agreement between the Navy and the CAA, whereby we would turn over to them, on a no-cost basis, the ex-PAA stations at Juneau, Taku Pass, Northway, Tannacross, Fairbanks, Tanana, Galena, Nome, Nulato, Bethel, Flat, McGrath and Anchorage.

## THE C.A.A. TAKES OVER FORMER PAA - NAVY GROUND STATIONS IN ALASKA AUG. 1944

It was decided in Washington that the physical transfer of the stations could be accomplished best by having a group representing all the interested parties visit each station. Accordingly such a group assembled at Juneau on August 15, 1944. The CAA Washington headquarters sent several specialists in Engineering, Operations, and Personnel from the Office of Federal Airways. Joe Tippets and Dick Manhardt were among them. CAA Anchorage also sent several specialists. Jerry Whittaker was one of them. "Chuck" Huntley represented PAA. I spoke for the Navy. CAA pilot Al Horning with a CAA twin-engine Beechcraft provided transportation for the group.

The following routine for turning over the stations was developed at Juneau by the group and was used at each station thereafter:

1. Entire party meet with all PAA personnel, including wives, for introductions, to explain the purpose of our trip, to outline CAA plans for the station, and to describe employment opportunities.
2. CAA engineering/maintenance people, in coordination with the appropriate PAA man, check the previously prepared inventory and become familiar with the physical aspects of the station.



Aug. 1944 - PAA Radio Xmtr House - Tanacross, Alaska

3. CAA operations people get together with the PAA Chief of Station to become familiar with the circuitry, frequency usage, traffic flow, etc.
4. CAA personnel specialists meet with any individuals interested in CAA employment. Navy representative meet with anyone interested in active military service.

When the above had been finished, Chuck Huntley would sign a statement on the inventory relinquishing PAA's custody of the station; the senior CAA man (Joe Tippets as I recall) would sign another statement on the inventory accepting the station; and I would sign a statement relinquishing Navy interest and attesting to the validity of the prior signatures. That constituted the formal turnover. If the personnel specialists had recruited any people for the CAA, appropriate papers would have been prepared and I would swear them into the Federal service on the spot. This done, we would proceed to the next station.

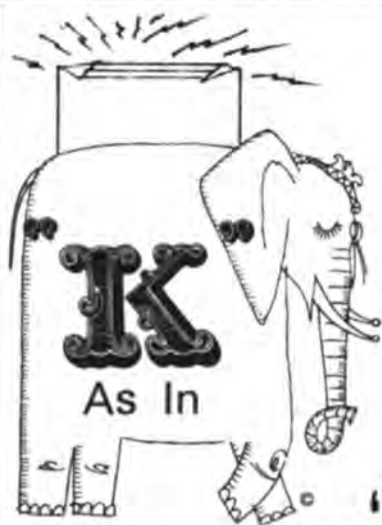
According to an old notebook our itinerary was as follows:

Aug. 17-18, 1944	Did Juneau and Taku Pass. Chartered Lockheed Vega on floats for Taku Pass trip.
Aug. 19	Went to Northway. Did that station. Went on to Tannacross.
Aug. 20	Did Tannacross. Went on to Fairbanks.
Aug. 21-24	Did Fairbanks. Got weathered in.
Aug. 25	Went to Tanana. Did that station. Went on to Galena.
Aug. 26	Did Galena. Went to Nome. Did Nome.
Aug. 27	Went to Nulato. Did that station. Went on to Bethel.
Aug. 28	Did Bethel. Went to Flat. Did that station. Went to McGrath.
Aug. 29	Did McGrath. Weathered in.
Aug. 30	Went to Anchorage. Did that station. END OF TRIP.

When we arrived back in Anchorage I found orders waiting which transferred me permanently to the staff of the Commander, Pacific Wing, NATS, at Honolulu, with instructions to be there in time to join an inspection party leaving for the western and South Pacific areas on September 8. I had to leave Alaska immediately and, much to my regret, have not been back since. Because of this I do not know what disposition CAA made of the stations. Perhaps Jerry Whittaker will write the third and final chapter of this story, I hope so!



Operating Position, PAA Radio Station, Tanacross, Alaska - Aug. 1944



**We've got good news, and we've got bad news.**

**"Konfusi<sup>o</sup>n"**

By "UnKonfused"—D. K.de Neuf

The use of common names to assist in the voice transmission and reception spelling of words has been standard practice for many years. But the "Phonetic Experts" in world meetings like that of ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) have caused the nomenclature to be changed several times. A, B, and C for many years was ABLE, BAKER, and CHARLIE. Now it's ALFA, BRAVO and CHARLIE. DOG became DELTA, LOVE turned into LIMA, IDA is now INDIA and QUEEN was renamed QUEBEC. But one wonders about the wisdom of choosing geographical names under circuit conditions of poor audio quality, static and interference, especially in these days of really wierd call signs. How about a message, under poor intelligibility: "This is LIMA 2 QUEBEC INDIA enroute to India via Lima and Quebec"? Confusing? It used to be simple: "This is LOVE 2 QUEEN IDA enroute to India via Lima and Quebec."

The single letter K (now phonetically KILO - it once was simply KING) in the Phillips code meant "out of." Whether this had any bearing on the age-old radio telegraph signal K is questionable. The ITU (International Telecommunications Union) has for years listed K as the signal for "invitation to transmit." The old alphabetical Arabic telegraph code used -- for "KAF," and the Greeks used it in theirs for "KAPPA." Even today Russian Morse uses the same signal for "KAH."

K has had significance in many fields: "KARAT" for caret in gold assaying; it's the symbol for the chemical element Potassium, and in mathematics for "constant"; in meteorology for "cumulous", and K was the old Roman numeral for 250, but today it stands for "1000" in electronic and mechanical measurements and inweights and distance measurements.

Speaking of K, the only voice operation I have ever heard which utilizes the simple phonetic letter K to mean "over" or "go ahead" or "come back" is the New York City Fire Department radio operation. It is simple, effective and never misunderstood. "BATTALION 51, DO YOU NEED ASSISTANCE, K." It even signifies "end of message - confirm receipt." ("LADDER 74 RETURNING TO QUARTERS, K.") When and how did this one get started? About 1930 Frank Borsody (W2AYN) left RCA's international radiotelegraph operations to join the New York City Fire Department to establish its first radiocommunication operation. What else would a seasoned radiotelegrapher employ to signal "go ahead"?

**List of Commercial and Coast Guard Stations With Frequencies**

All stations on CW unless otherwise noted. Data are not recent but most may still be valid. Frequencies are in kHz (HF or MF)

- WMH - BALTIMORE RADIO**  
428, 500 (MF); 8610, 12952.9, 17093.6 (HF)
- WCC - CHATHAM, MA RADIO**  
436, 460, 500 (MF); 4238, 4268, 4331, 6333.5, 633.7, 6376, 8586, 8630, 12925.5, 12961.5, 13033.5, 16904.9, 16933.2, 16972, 16973.5, 22348.5, 22366.5, 22518, 22521.
- WPD - TAMPA, FLA**  
420, 500 (MF); 4274, 6365.5, 8615.5, 13051.5, 17170.4
- WSL - AMAGANSETT, NY RADIO**  
418, 442, 476, 500 (MF); 4342.65, 6414.5, 6416, 6418, 8514, 8658, 12660, 12997.5, 13024.9, 16997.6, 17021.6, 22485, 22487.
- WLO - MOBILE, ALABAMA**  
434, 438, 500 (MF); 2055.5, 4256, 4256.5, 6446, 6446.5, 8445, 8445.5, 8453, 8474.5, 12704.5, 12885, 12886.5, 16967.5, 16968.5, 17172.4, 17173.5, 22318.5, 22319.5, 22320.
- KPH - SAN FRANCISCO, CA**  
126.15, 143, 147.85, 426, 460, 500, (MF); 4247, 6477.5, 8618, 12808.5, 13002, 17016.5, 17016.8, 22479, 22557.
- WOE - LANTANA, FLA**  
472, 500 (MF); 4292, 6411.35, 8486, 12970.5, 17160.8, 22503.
- WNU - SLIDELL, LA**  
478, 500 (MF); 2048, 4310, 6326.5, 6389.65, 8515, 8570, 12826.5, 13011, 16861.7, 17117.6, 22431, 22458.
- KLC - GALVESTON, TEX.**  
484, 500 (MF); 4256, 6369, 8508, 8666, 13038, 16871.3, 22467.
- WPA - PORT ARTHUR, TEX.**  
416, 500, 2042, 4322, 6435.5, 8550, 12839.5, 16918.8, 22318.5.
- WOO - OCEAN GATE, NEW JERSEY (May be all A3A or A3J)**  
4385.3, 4388.4, 4403.9, 4422.5, 8740.6, 8749.9, 8762.3, 8796.4, 13107, 13128.7, 13131.8, 13184.5, 13190.7, 17245.3, 17291.8, 17310.4, 17325.9, 22596, 22608.4, 22623.9, 22704.5.
- NMA - MIAMI COAST GUARD**  
440, 500, (MF); 6506.4 (A3J).
- NMF - BOSTON COAST GUARD**  
472, 500, (MF); 8459, 12783, 6506.4 (A3J).
- NMG - NEW ORLEANS COAST GUARD**  
432, 500.  
The following all A3J: 2182, 2670, 4428.7, 6506.4, 8765.4, 13113.2.
- NMN - PORTSMOUTH, VA COAST GUARD**  
466, 500, 8465, 12718.5, 16976;  
The following all A3J: 4428.7, 6506.4, 13113.2.

- F.R.

**ARRL Adopted ICAO Phonetic Alphabet**

(International Civil Aviation Organization)

- A ALFA
- B BRAVO
- C CHARLIE
- D DELTA
- E ECHO
- F FOXTROT
- G GOLF
- H HOTEL
- I INDIA
- J JULIETT
- K KILO
- L LIMA
- M MIKE
- N NOVEMBER
- O OSCAR
- P PAPA
- Q QUEBEC
- R ROMEO
- S SIERRA
- T TANGO
- U UNIFORM
- V VICTOR
- W WHISKEY
- X X-RAY
- Y YANKEE
- Z ZULU



"FLY CAREFULLY, LT SIMS. IT'S PAYDAY."



HERE, THERE

EVERYWHERE

Roaming with Robert E. Dale 497-SGP

**A**fter looking over "The Roster" I was amazed at the number of talented members belonging to our "Society": - Journalists, Lawyers, Doctors, Naval Officers, Business Ex's., etc. etc., all former "Lids"? And apparently they all made good. As for me, I could never stay put. To quote a verse I found in my 1912 diary:

"For ten long years a 'boomer,'  
Always answering the call  
Of this restless, roaming fever,  
Which seems to catch us all."

I was born in the mountains of Pennsylvania, the year of the Johnstown Flood. I have never been able to prove that as they kept no birth records in that state until 1900. Lack of a birth certificate made no difference in WW-1, but it sure made a difference in WW-2, after the Coast Guard had taken over the Chamber of Commerce duties with respect to the issuance of licenses to merchant marine officers.

While working extra relieving agents and operators at various points on Cotton Belt (StL.S.W.) in Arkansas, circa 1910, I ran into a Boomer at Lewisville who told me about the wireless game. I resigned by wire and when my relief showed up headed for good old N.O., at that time the nicest city in the whole world. Bill Wilcox, manager of the United Wireless Station on the roof of the Grunewald Hotel, greeted me with open arms, the beginning of some of the happiest days of my life, with some of the finest people in the world.

My wireless career started on June 12, 1911, and on June 24th I signed on the S/S CHALMETTE (KC) of the Sou. Pac. Co., destined Habana and return.

My "Operator's Certificate of Skill in Radio Communication" was issued at the Naval Station, New Orleans, July 5, 1911, and signed by J. A. Davis, U.S.M. My next License No. 2395, Comm. First Grade, was also issued at the N.O. Naval Sta., signed by Alonzo Burke, Chief Carpenter, USN, Ret., dated Oct. 6, 1913. Oddly enough Par. (b) reads "Transmitting and sound reading at a speed of not less than 26 words a minute, Continental Morse." Heck! We were still using American Morse, after we passed the 3 mile limit. My last First Grade was dated July 29, 1919, good for 2 years. So on July 28, 1921: Exit . . . . . another LID.

Incidentally I held Card No. 100, The United Radio Operators-Association. No date of issue shown, just my name % Marconi Co.

While the United Wireless operated the Grunewald Hotel Station and another at South Pass, at the mouth of the Mississippi River, the United Fruit Co. operated stations at Cape San Antonio, Cuba, Swan Island, La Ceiba, Honduras, Puerto Limon, Costa Rico, Bocasdel Toro, Panama, and their ships acted as shore stations while in Colon. Old timers may remember Opr Stewart-La Ceiba, Pitcher at Limon, the relay point, and Bob Smith (S) at Bocas del Toro, all brilliant operators. On occasions when I was in Colon on the Atenas, Parismina, Abangarez, etc., Pitcher would open up with those messy mixed letter and figure code messages at what seemed like 75 wpm, however, he and I usually used American Morse.

Bob Smith at Bocas was a close friend of mine and we always had a party while I was in port, joined, of course, by that fine bunch of fellers who worked for the UFC. (Scotch was \$1 a bottle.) The UFC boys had a fine mess, and the natives knew how to make a delicious stew out of Iguanas which tasted like chicken only better.

Sometimes a party can get one into trouble. On April 4, 1914, we celebrated somebody's birthday and I missed the boat (S/S Preston) by 3 minutes. The Preston was a chartered Norwegian ship and the Skipper and I had little love for one another. I shipped out the next day on the Ft Morgan bound for Mobile, fully expecting to get fired on arrival at N.O. Instead I was assigned to the S/S Parismina, a promotion. However, the skipper of the Preston really turned me in. He informed Mr. Musgrave that I hadn't drawn a sober breath in the five and half months I had been with him, and that I kept a bottle of Scotch at each elbow, while on duty, so that if one hand was busy I could reach for a bottle with the other hand. Needless to say that was an exaggeration. (I always kept them under the table.)

Sorry to report that my friend Bob Smith let whiskey get the best of him. Several years later I met him in N.O. and he told me he was smuggling guns into some Central American country. Not long after that he was found dead in some cheap rooming house in New Orleans.

As a wireless operator I served on the following ships: Chalmette, Ceiba, Jos. Vaccaro, Ellis, Heredia, Abangarez, Ponce, Marowijne, Preston, Parismina, atenas, Tegucigalpa, S/Y Wild Duck, City of Mexico, Topila, Wrecking tug Senator Bailey, Yoro, Panuco, Medina, New York, Buena Ventura, Manchuria, Tilford, Edw. L. Doheny, California, Barge Socony 82. As a Deck Officer: USAT Monticello, S/Schooner Fair Oaks, Keresan, West Eldara, Jennine R. Morse, Patrick Henry, Seekonk, Wallkill and Casey.

As I stated in my membership application I am not eligible for membership in the "SOS-CQD'ers club," although I heard dozens of "SOS" calls during WW-1, we were under strict orders to remain silent. Most of the time we were members of convoys, or had Naval escorts. Although I had many narrow escapes, I was extremely lucky. The UFC Marowijne was lost in a hurricane with all hands, Nov. 1913. I was pulled off her for that one trip. We delivered the California to the French at Bordeaux--she was torpedoed the first trip the frogs took her out.

(Continued on Page 31)

The Buena Ventura scheduled first out of Swansea, England, developed engine trouble and the ship that went out first hit a mine. The trip following she was torpedoed off Gibraltar, but I had left her in N.Y. to go on the Manchuria. The German subs torpedoed several vessels out of our convoys but we were lucky. The Edw. L. Doheny, loaded with gasoline, had a sub surface a few yards on our starboard bow. I thought "This is it" but apparently the British "Q" ship escorting us was too close on her tail, and the torpedo never came. In a few minutes there were flocks of fishing boats heading out into the channel. They laid some kind of a net, and claimed they sank the U-Boat.

Incidentally on April 14, 1912, while listening in on my electrolytic detector, halfway between Belize, B.H. and New Orleans, I heard the various ships talking to David Sarnoff about the Titanic's SOS. I was on the S/S Ellis at the time.

About the W/T Senator Bailey: The owners of this tug happened to get hold of a Marconi Rotary spark gap set (don't ask me how), and I installed it, flat top antenna and all. I was opr-deck hand on her for a year or more and had a ball. We had our own message forms and made good use of the set. Needless to say I kept the static room locked while in port. (Please forgive me, David Sarnoff.)

August, 1912, I arrived in N.Y. on the SS Ponce, from Puerto Rico and suddenly got the R.R. fever again. Worked in N.Y., Canada, and Northwestern States until September, 1913, when I returned to the U.F. Co. out of New Orleans. Remained with the U.F. until July 1914. While returning from Panama to New Orleans on the Atenas, I received a wire from Max Meyer, who operated a cigar stand in front of the famous Ramos Cafe, famed for its Gin Fizzes. Max's stand was the official headquarters for all the wireless oprs. His message warned me to resign by wire, which I did. I just can't remember what the charges against me were. In those days it was all in the game.

So I went back to my old love again: railroading. Buford, Sherman, Wyoming, on the U.P., Battle Mountain, Nev. SP, to California and bumming up the West Coast to Portland and Seattle, on to Montana, Colorado, stopped at Altus, Okla. with the WF&NW 3 weeks for a stake, then back to New Orleans December, 1914. Sailed on SS Tegucigalpa, to Ceiba, Honduras.

January and February, 1915, I was opr on the Steam Yacht Wild Duck, Gulf Refining Co. anchored in the Panuca river at Tampico, Mexico, standing by to pick up refugees, during a revolution. The crew was mostly afraid to go ashore as things were a bit rough, especially on Americans. However, I had had experience and knew how to get along with Mexicans. I went ashore when I felt like it. A Peon with a big knife held me up one night but when I talked to him in Spanish, he got cold feet, grabbed my watch and ran. (It was a \$1 watch.)

When leaving Tampico we had a bit of trouble with a Mexican Gunboat. He trained his guns on us but there was a British gunboat in the harbor, who requested us to run up the British flag; which we did and he escorted us out.

After two round trips on the Topila to N.Y., signed on wrecker tug Senator Bailey for one year, then on various other vessels until April, 1918, when I returned to N.Y. as a passenger on the French ship "Niagara" after delivering the "California" to the French government. May to June 1918 inc. I attended Uttmarks Nautical Academy on the Battery. July 5, 1918, I had sufficient time as a deck swab and successfully passed the examination for Third Mate and in August was assigned to the USAT Monticello as reserve deck officer. . . . I served on the Monty for about one year, during which time I was promoted to 4th, then 3rd officer. After which I served as deck officer on a number of vessels, finally obtaining my Masters License, (Steam and motor vessels, any gross tons-oceans), I was then assigned to the "President Van Buren" of the United States Lines, when in deference to my wife's wishes (I had just gotten married), I quit the Seal Nov. 1, 1922 I have managed to keep my License by making occasional trips on fishing vessels, and, as I told "FS", I was all set to go to Viet Nam on one of the Navy's M.S.T.S., Pac. Area, ships, in April '67 until they took a look at my license and discovered I was then 78 years old. The USCG, Lieut. Commander, who renewed my license, was pulling for me but without avail. I just couldn't get out to Oakland at that time, so they could look me over. I'm active and don't look my age.

I'm sorry I can't give you any data on my old shipmates. Haven't kept in touch with them, and it's been sooo long ago.

After leaving the sea I found landlubber competition for jobs a bit tough around N.Y. I started off with Butterick Publications; no success. Then I tried serving summons which paid well but was no job for a lightweight; I got squashed against the walls, sat on by a big fat Jewish lady, became expert at ducking punches, had a gun pulled on me, and one nice looking lady actress tried to scratch my eyes out. Later I opened up an Employment Agency, The Hanover Employment Exchange, at 56 Pine Street, down in the financial district. My wife was my secretary and stenographer. Was doing all right until a mild depression hit the big town and I sold out. I then returned to the railroad (LI) as Agent until Nov. 1924 when I headed for Florida.

The Seaboard had just finished their railroad as far as W. P. Beach at the end of 1924, and although I landed there as an opr., the Auditors checked me in as Depot Passgr. Agent. I opened the shebang up and we got real busy right away. We had bus service to Miami.

I worked DPA job 8 months then transferred to the City Office for 3 months. After which I was offered a position with the Mizner Development Corporation, developers of Boca Raton, which I accepted.

In early 1926 the Florida land boom started to collapse and I left the real estate biz and started a candy business of my own in cooperation with the Stewart-Earl Candy Co. They had a nice factory in Hialeah, and made the finest candy I ever tasted. The Dale Candy Co., was listed in Bradstreet and I had credit with all the major candy companies. Florida had "one arm bandits" and game and candy punch boards in those days. I really had a good thing going, when BANG! the Sept. '26 hurricane tore the roof off the factory, and blew most of my customers' joints away. The banks had closed with most of my dinero. "Gone With The Wind." I borrowed \$100 from a former shipmate, Capt. William J. Merrick, of San Francisco, sold my Buick, put a mattress in the back of my candy truck, and headed for New York. Finally went back to the good old LIRR where I was appointed Agent for the Port Washington Branch. Returned to Florida in '43 and opened a Laundry-D.C. plant. Also in Florida I was connected with the FEC for a number of years and finally retired in 1963. My health has been good and my XYL and I are enjoying our few remaining years. We spend considerable time with our boy in Washington, who is Vice President and General Manager of the Washington branch of the System Development Corp. of Santa Monica, Calif., also we have a wonderful daughter, a former nurse, who is married to a doctor. They live in San Jose, Calif., and have been pressuring us to move out there. We expect to visit them in May and take a look around. However, we love Florida; do a lot of camping, and my hobby is fishing. You can't beat the Indian River country for that.

In conclusion I would like to know what happened to J.B. Duffy, of the Static Room, in N. Y., also W.F. Fitzpatrick, opr., and two very dear friends of mine; Lieut. Comm. Frank Muller, who was Chief Officer on the Keresan with me, and Wm. J. Merrick, who taught me the fine points of Navigation, while we were shipmates on the USAT Monticello, WW-1. Capt. Merrick later sailed out of San Francisco. His home at one time was at 370 Missouri St. The last two were not operators.





# SEA LANGUAGE

## SPOKEN HERE

SALTY  
ROUGH  
COLORFUL  
SEA CHANTIES  
PIDGION ENGLISH  
TALKEE TALKEE  
PEDDLER'S FRENCH  
DOUBLE DUTCH  
CHINOOK  
BAMBOO ENGLISH  
MANY MORE . . . .



### Expressions We Use Every Day

Did you know many of the terms we use every day originated aboard our early sailing ships. We think you'll be surprised when you read this article which we are reprinting here from the SURVEYOR, The Surveyor is the quarterly publication of the American Bureau of Shipping, to whom we extend our sincere thanks for permission to use their story.

The rich colorful vocabulary of the sea from generations past is still a vibrant part of daily English language. Most persons do not know the origins of words and phrases that have become colloquial expressions, and time has changed or distorted the meanings.

What were precise directions or descriptions have become general phrases that hint at meaning. Yet, they retain the flavor and imply the discipline they once had—and the language of the sea emphasizes discipline. Going to sea—whether for sustenance, transportation, or war—was not a carefree business. The late dean of American maritime history, Samuel Eliot Morison, chastised the poet Allan Cunningham for his ballad.

"O for a soft and gentle wind!  
I heard a fair one cry:  
But give to me the soaring breeze  
And white waves heaving high."

#### BALONEY

Morison wailed, "Baloney! No real seaman likes high and heavy seas because they bring trouble and danger. His ideal is the trades—a good steady full-sail breeze . . . ."

#### LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG

Discipline has always been demanded by the taskmasters of the sea. "He let the cat out of the bag," said today is often followed by an expletive deleted. Six score years ago on board a square rigger, this utterance would have brought chills to the spine, for some poor soul had just committed an offense sufficiently grave to extract the cat-on-nine-tails from its canvas bag. The cat has been out of vogue since the early nineteenth century and needs an introduction. The cat was made of nine lengths of cord, each about 18 inches long with free knots at the tip, fixed to the end of a larger rope which was used as a handle. Flogging, at the very least would cause severe wounds and could cripple or even cause death. Only Errol Flynn and fellow Hollywood mariners have been able to shrug off its effects. The United States Congress prohibited the use of the cat in 1850, and it was outlawed from the British Royal Navy in 1879. In fact, the cat had fallen into disuse in both fleets shortly after the War of 1812. This brutal instrument is also the basis of the expression "not enough room to swing a cat." Obviously, the two-foot cat, added to the length of the fully extended arm of the flogger, required a good measure of working room

#### "BLUE MONDAY"

A sailor's misdeeds were recorded daily, and punishment was carried out on the following Monday; thus, the birth of the expression "blue Monday."

Sailors were considered a rough lot and not to be trusted by their superiors—the officers. Although armed to the teeth when the enemy was at hand, sailors were prohibited from having weapons at any other time. The one exception to this rule was the knife, for this was an essential tool for all seamen. Should, however, the sailor draw his knife in anger, he could lose his hand as specified by British Admiralty law—thus, the derivation of the expression "hands off."

#### "SCUTTLE BUTT"

Maritime discipline was harsh: human rights were restricted and, as a result, specific shipboard havens developed. The term "scuttle butt" evolved from this background. There was a cask (butt) with a square hole (scuttle) cut in its bilge, kept on deck to hold water for ready use. On board ships where discipline was strictly enforced, merchant as well as war, the "scuttle butt" was one of the few places on deck where sailors were at liberty to talk; and, today, the term is synonymous with gossip.

#### "THE SMOKING LAMP IS LIT"

Discipline was the ounce of prevention in combating the ancient mariners' greatest fear—fire at sea. Today, "the smoking lamp is lit" frees an individual to "light up" wherever he might be. This interpretation does not bear the severe restriction originally intended. For aboard ship, this lamp was the only place where the sailor had access to fire, and the tobacco had to be smoked in its immediate vicinity, usually the galley (kitchen). To protect the weak-willed from the "cat," sailors were not permitted to carry flint—the match was not in general use until the middle of the nineteenth century. As iron and steel replaced wood as the primary building material for ships, additional precautions against fire were enforced on vessels carrying dangerous cargoes. For example, mariners were prohibited from wearing shoes using metal nails. A spark in the magazine of a warship or the hold of a merchantman loaded with nitrates or grains could be catastrophic.

At sea, the captain and the law were synonymous. Martyrdom was the only reward for the individual who opposed injustice. This is illustrated in American literature by Herman Melville's novel *Billy Budd*. However, the system could be challenged if there was strength through numbers, and if leaders could be protected by concealing their identity. Immunity was achieved by the "round robin." Signatures on a grievance petition would appear as a circular pattern of ribbons similar to the spokes of a wheel.

#### "ROUND ROBIN"

The robin is derived from the French *ruban*, or ribbon. Hiding the identity of the leaders within the circle of signatures may be the origin of the term "ringleader" as well.

#### "CATTING AROUND"

Going ashore was in fact as well as name, liberty, and sailors had the reputation of taking full advantage of the relaxed discipline. "Catting around" is a colloquial expression meaning frivolity. Richard Henry Dana wrote that "cat" used as a verb means "to hoist the anchor up to the cathead." In order to raise the anchor, hickory bars were inserted into a capstan, a spool-shaped cylinder; and like children on a merry-go-round, the men strained around this apparatus. This may be the origin of "catting around."

#### "MIND YOUR P's & Q's"

#### "DOWN THE HATCH"

#### "THREE SHEETS TO THE WIND"

Mariners, being the chief patrons of seaport pubs, were often extended credit. A tally board was kept of the pints and quarts that a sailor consumed. The quartermaster of the ship, who was responsible for having a full crew for the next sailing, did well to remind his charges to "mind your P's and Q's," since this equated to their consumption. And, of course, sailors would have to toast the drink with "down the hatch." If a mariner consumed too much alcohol and became intoxicated, he would be "three sheets to the wind." A sheet is a line used for trimming a sail to the wind. Three broken sheets would render any sailing ship uncontrollable.

(Continued Next Page)



Ship

The designation "ship" is properly restricted to the full-rigged vessel—large, square-rigged, with three masts each carrying a full complement of square sails. Each mast is composed of three separate spars—a lower mast, a top-mast, and a topgallant mast. In addition to the square sails on the mizzenmast (closest to the stern), this example also carries a schooner-type gaff-sail called the spanker.



Brigantine

As a class of brig, the brigantine has two masts. The foremast, made of three separate spars, is square-rigged. The mainmast, however, is made up in two spars and carries a fore-and-aft mainsail, over which are two or three yards from which are rigged a square main-topsail and (when there are three yards) a topgallant-sail. No sail is carried on the lower, or main yard.



Schooner

The schooner has two or more masts, all of which are fore-and-aft rigged. The sails can be either full triangle or gaff-rigged (as above). Schooners were popular in coastal trade work and as off-shore fishing boats—widely used off North America. Most popular of the rigs were the three-masted schooners (above) which could be handled by a captain, mate, cook, and four crewmen. Many four-, five-, and six-masted schooners were built. One seven-masted schooner was constructed.





# SOS BY FLASHLIGHT



William V. Moore,  
second operator

How the appeal for aid, spelled out in the darkness by Waale, wireless man on the wrecked oil ship Chester, was received by Operator Moore on the Philadelphia which rescued the crew of the tanker



First Officer Lyon



J. Edward Jones,  
first operator

THE disadvantages of being without wireless telegraphy on the sea and the advantages of having radio men at hand when the waters are reaching out for their prey are illustrated in the accounts of the wreck of the oil tank steamship Chester. The Chester, with her superstructure destroyed by the waves, drifting where it pleased the seas to hurl her, was not equipped with wireless. She did have among her officers, however, one, Waale, who holds a cargo grade wireless certificate. All of the signal lights except one having been saturated with water, it devolved upon him to send out the S O S by flash-light.

While the Chester's men were waiting and hoping for rescuers to appear the steamship Philadelphia was making her way unknown either to her commander or to that of the tanker toward the wreck. And through good fortune the steamship reached a point within a few miles of the Chester—so near in fact that the officers of the former saw Waale's S O S spelled out in the darkness.

On the Philadelphia were Marconi Operators Jones and Moore. The latter, summoned to the bridge to respond to the signals of Waale, received the messages which told of the hopeless fight the Chester's crew had made against the sea, and informed the men on the wreck that the liner would "stand by." And she did "stand by," the entire ship's company of thirty-three men being transferred safely to the Philadelphia. First Officer Lyon was in charge of the rescue life-boat when it made its second trip to the Chester. He is known among wireless men as the inventor of the cerusite detector.

Laden with a cargo of oil, the Chester, owned by the American Petroleum Company, left New York on January 23 bound for Rotterdam. She had been out of port only a few days when she ran into rough weather. Then a tank bulkhead burst, the pressure of the oil opening the decks. But it was not until February 2 that Captain Herman Segebarth, the commander of the vessel, and his men began to have any misgivings regarding the safety of themselves and the ship. On the afternoon of that day the waves increased in size and one of

them—a giant roller—swept over the vessel, leaving a train of damage in its wake.

On the bridge at the time were Second Officer Jacobus W. Waale and a quartermaster who was at the wheel. They were caught up in the deluge which threatened to hurl them over the sides. Captain Segebarth, who was in the chart room when the wave struck the vessel, was shot to a point not far from the second officer and the quartermaster. After the men had regained their feet they took account of the damage and found that almost everything on deck, including the life-boats, had been swallowed up by the waters. Three men were thrown from their bunks and injured.

Captain Segebarth gave orders to pump out two of the oil tanks in order to keep the seas from wreaking their full fury on the Chester. The men were spared this task, however, for some of the hatches had been demolished and the oil was pouring out of them in large quantities.

As the day waned conditions on the tanker became worse. The bunkers having been flooded, the engines were stopped and the vessel fell into the trough of the sea, listing so heavily to port that her rails were in the water. Darkness found her tossing about at the mercy of the waves and the members of the ship's company wondering how long she could withstand the terrific pounding of the seas.

In this emergency Captain Segebarth turned to Waale for assistance. The second officer held a cargo grade wireless certificate and was therefore familiar with the Morse signalling code. The little band on the wave-battered craft looked to him therefore to bring aid by sending out S O S by flashlight.

All that night the Chester was driven by wind and wave, while Waale directed the rays from a lamp over the waters, ever spelling out S O S. but there was no response to his appeal nor to the one signal light that remained undamaged by the water. Dawn broke with no signs of rescuing craft in sight. Flag signals of distress were hoisted, but they were unfurled in vain and night again found the vessel drifting about aimlessly. Again Waale sent out the flash-light signals, while the ship's company waited

anxiously for a reply. But none came. And finally the men on the Chester were compelled to abandon hope almost entirely. They knew that the vessel was on the northern route—a path which is used by few vessels at this time of the year—and that only good fortune would put them in the way of another ship. But Waale, despite the desperate odds which the Chester's people were facing, continued to flash his signals over the trackless waste. This was the situation on the tanker early on the morning of February 4.

In the meantime the American Line steamship Philadelphia was making her way across the Atlantic bound from Liverpool to New York. She, too, met with heavy weather, having encountered a severe storm when only a few days out of port. The weather conditions were such in fact that the liner on one day steamed only sixty-six miles. Her average rate of speed is 450 miles a day.

The Philadelphia was in the mid-Atlantic on the northern steamship route about one o'clock on the morning of February 4. Captain Arthur Mills, her commander, had chosen this path instead of the southern course in the hope of avoiding the weather conditions reported to prevail on the latter route. It was while the Philadelphia was feeling her way through the night under an overcast sky that a light so small that it seemed no larger than a spark was sighted. As the liner neared the light it became evident to her officers that a vessel was signalling the Philadelphia. Third Officer Ellis had some knowledge of the Morse code and after a while he was

able to make out the letters S O S. And finally the men on the Chester were compelled to abandon hope almost entirely. They knew that the vessel was on the northern route—a path which is used by few vessels at this time of the year—and that only good fortune would put them in the way of another ship. But Waale, despite the desperate odds which the Chester's people were facing, continued to flash his signals over the trackless waste. This was the situation on the tanker early on the morning of February 4.

ator. "Do you want to be taken off?" came a jerky, nervous "Yes," every flash of Waale's lamp seeming to emphasize the hopeless predicament of Captain Segebarth and his men. To these signals Moore responded that the Philadelphia would "stand by" to take off those on the wreck. It was not an easy rescue to effect, however. Tremendous seas were running and Captain Mills, fearful that his ship would be imperilled by the drifting hulk, kept the steamship a mile and a half away. It was a matter of conjecture, too, whether a small boat could live in the rough waters. So Captain Mills called for volunteers to go to the wreck in the port emergency life-boat. Chief Officer Candy and five seamen jumped into the craft from the boat deck and, one more man being needed, another seaman volunteered. Considerable skill was displayed in the launching of the boat. The men in charge of this task waited until the Philadelphia rolled heavily to port with the waves before lowering it from the davits. Then, by degrees, it was slid toward the water, and thirty minutes after the call for help had been received it was on its way toward the dancing light which indicated the position of the Chester.

As the life-boat pulled away from the steamship, Moore again flashed his lamp, signalling "Boat now leaving. Look out for it." From Waale's lamp came a few flickers, acknowledging the message.

In the small boat Candy's crew battled with the waves for a long time before they were able to get within hailing distance of the wreck. First they went to the stern of the ship and then to the

The Philadelphia, whose timely arrival at the scene of the wreck was the salvation of the tanker's crew. She, too, met with heavy weather, having encountered severe storms when she was only a few days out of port



In this photograph the members of the crew of the Chester are shown after they had recovered from their trying experience on the storm-racked vessel. They were snapped by the camera on the decks of the Philadelphia, one of the men being pictured with a cat, which claims the liner as its home, clasped in his arms

able to make out the letters S O S.

In charge of the Marconi equipment on the Philadelphia were First Operator J. Edward Jones and Second Operator William V. Moore. Jones was going off duty when Captain Mills telephoned to the wireless cabin from the bridge, asking him to attempt to establish wireless communication with the craft. So Jones sent out a general call—CQ—and followed it up with the query: "What ship is that abeam?" Those on the Philadelphia were not aware, of course, that the vessel with which they were attempting to communicate was the Chester and that she had no wireless.

Captain Mills and his officers in the meantime were making preparations to respond to the signals of the Chester by means of the Philadelphia's Morse lamp, Moore being summoned to the bridge to operate the light.

"What is the matter?" was the first message he flashed. It was almost thirty minutes before he received a reply. Then, Waale, from the rocking deck of the Chester, responded that "We are a wreck." He also repeated the S O S call several times. Little by little those on the Philadelphia gained a rough idea of the plight of the men on the Chester. The Chester had no boats, Waale signalled to Moore, in response to the latter's question. And finally, in answer to the query of the Philadelphia's oper-

windward, finally arriving at a position on the lee side. All of the rescued men were compelled to jump into the sea, from which they were pulled into the life-boat by means of a line. This was fastened to the life-belts of the wreck victims and, with the Chester's people holding one end of the rope, and the other in the hands of Candy's men, the members of the tanker's crew, one by one, plunged over the side. In this manner twenty-two men were transferred to the life-boat.

The pull back to the Philadelphia was no less full of peril than the trip to the wreck. The seas washed into the boat, some of the men being constantly engaged in bailing. The rescued huddled in the bottom of the craft until it reached the steamship when they jumped for the

rope ladders thrown over the sides. This method of getting them to the decks of the vessel was found to be perilous, however, for some narrowly escaped being crushed between the life-boat and the steamship as the two were lifted on the crests of the waves; others mounted the ladders only to be blown about by the wind at imminent risk of losing their grip on the ladder and falling into the sea. It was found necessary, therefore, to fasten a rope around each man and pull him to the deck.

(Continued on Page 35)



A photograph of the Chester which was taken as the Philadelphia steamed away. The wrecked ship was set on fire after her crew had been rescued in order to do away with the danger of other craft coming into collision with her

(Continued from Page 34)



## FLASHLIGHT SOS

But eleven men, including Captain Segebarth and Waale, still remained on the Chester. The boat of which Chief Officer Candy was in charge had been gone two hours, only making the trip and effecting the rescues by the exercise of the most skilful seamanship. It was now half filled with water and the stories told by Candy's men of the difficulties and dangers encountered on the trip gave those on the Philadelphia a vivid idea of what it meant to be afloat in the mountainous waves in a small craft.

There was another call for volunteers, however, and First Officer Lyon went in charge of the boat. It met with much the same battering from the seas that it underwent on its first trip. Lyon found that the Chester was still listing heavily and was standing high out of the water. Captain Segebarth and the others were waiting for the boat, but before they left the Chester they set the vessel ablaze in order to do away with the danger to other craft. This having been accomplished, the boat set out for the Philadelphia. The trip was perhaps more hazardous than the pull back to the steamship made by Candy's men, for the life-boat was now so wracked and pounded by the seas that she was hardly seaworthy. So, after it had reached the Philadelphia and the last man had gained the decks of the vessel, the boat was dropped astern where it was broken into pieces by the screw of the steamship.

The liner then proceeded on her voyage, a cloud of smoke marking the position of the Chester. As the Philadelphia steamed away a wireless message was sent broadcast telling of the location of the wreck and warning the commanders of east-bound steamships regarding it.

## VESSEL CRUSHED IN THE ICE

George Keefe, Marconi operator on the steamer Iowa, showed his devotion to duty when the vessel was crushed in the ice in Lake Michigan, off the mouth of the Chicago River, on January 3, by remaining at his post to send the S O S until five minutes before she sank. He and the others on the hapless craft, including one woman, made their way to safety by walking for a mile and a half over the ice to shore.

The Iowa, steaming from Milwaukee to Chicago, with a crew of seventy and one passenger, was in sight of the harbor at the latter city when she fell into the clutch of the ice floes. Captain Stufflebeam, commander of the Iowa, sent the following marconigram at fifteen minutes to eight o'clock on the morning of the wreck to the Chicago offices of the Goodrich Transit Company, which owned the steamer:

"In open water off the C. H. Harrison crib."

Another wireless message was sent from the Iowa at fifteen minutes to ten o'clock to the effect that she was "making good progress." Then at thirty-five minutes after ten o'clock came this message:

"Send tug at once. Fast in ice. Ice running hard. Starboard forward planking struck loose. Leaking badly."

Rescue craft were dispatched at once, but in the meantime those on the Iowa had made their way to the ice.

Keefe told the following story of the wreck:

"Four miles off the government light-house we got wedged in the ice. We fought it from five to nine o'clock. Then the ice began to close in on us and we saw the impending doom of the ship. I sent a message, almost a frantic call, to the Goodrich office, and when she started to sink I sent the S O S."

F. H. Mason, superintendent of the Great Lakes Division of the Marconi Company, has written to Keefe saying that "it has given me a great deal of pleasure to know that you, like all of the other Marconi operators who have been put to the test, came through with flying colors. I wish to congratulate you on your conduct."

*The stories [2] SS Iowa Crushed in ice of Lake Michigan and the Yacht Wakiva wrecked in Tampico from March 1915 issue of the Wireless Age, supplied by SOWP member Frank Camenisch (147-SGP) [Silent Key 6-21-1975]*

# THE REAL CHAIN OF COMMAND

COMPANY OFFICERS MUST PASS THE FOLLOWING NAUGHTY-ICAL TEST

**PRESIDENT - [ Ex-Admiral ]**

Leaps tall buildings in a single bound  
Is more powerful than the SS Leviathan  
Is faster than a speeding bullet  
Walks on water if the sea is calm

**EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT - [Ex-Commodore]**

Leaps short buildings in a single bound  
Is more powerful than the SS Queen Mary  
Is just as fast as a speeding bullet  
Walks on water if the sea is calm  
Talks with God.

**TREASURER-COMPTROLLER [ Ex-Purser ]**

Leaps short buildings with a running start and favorable winds.  
Is almost as powerful as the SS Lurline  
Is faster than a speeding B.B.  
Talks with God if special request is approved.

**PORT CAPTAIN - [ Ex-Four Stripper ]**

Barely clears a Quonset hut  
loses tug-of-war with SS Harvard  
Can fire a speeding bullet  
Swims well  
Is occasionally addressed by God.

**SHIP CAPTAINS [Ex Arm-chair Navigators]**

Lifts buildings and walks under them  
Purchases non-company ships out his way  
Catches speeding bullets in his teeth and eats them.  
Freezes water with a single glance.  
He IS God

**TRAFFIC MANAGER - [ Ex-Chief Stevedore ]**

Makes high marks on the wall when trying to leap buildings.  
Is swamped as the SS Princess Margurette sails past.  
Can sometimes handle a gun without inflicting self injury  
Talks to animals.

**SUPERINTENDENT OF CARGO HANDLING - [ Ex-First Mate ]**

Runs into buildings  
Recognizes largest liners two out of three them as they pass by in the harbor.  
Is not issued ammunition.  
Can stay afloat with life jacket.  
Talks to walls.

**PORT STEWARD - [ Ex Fry-cook ]**

Falls over doorsteps when trying to enter office . Jacobs Latter off limits.  
Says ... "Look at the pretty boat going by"  
Wets himself with a water pistol  
Plays in mud puddles along the dock  
Mumbles to himself.

**CHIEF WIRELESS OFFICER - [ SOWP Member ]**

Gets caught in revolving door entering Main Office. Dizzy ...  
Sues SS Co. for \$500,000. Company makes out-of-court settlement for \$1 Million plus 1 case of alcohol for the Ar(k).  
Waves magic wand - Atomic missiles reverse direction, blow up at point of origin.  
Puts on Superman suite, Dick Tracey Watch/TV and flies the world without effort.  
Drinks "grid-leak" nectar - becomes invisible, becomes der liddle man who wasn't there.  
Staff Report - The Ancient Mariner. [Not copyrighted]

## SOS From the Tampico Breakwater

### THE WAKIVA WRECKED OFF TAMPICO

Wireless telegraphy was employed in an effort to summon aid to the steam yacht Wakiva when she went on the rocks off the Tampico (Mexico) breakwater on the night of January 8. The vessel was abandoned and those on board were rescued by means of a breeches buoy.

The Wakiva, which was owned by Edward L. Doheny, of Los Angeles, Cal., left Tampico at half-past seven o'clock on the night of January 7 for Galveston with Marconi Operator P. Daniels in charge of the wireless. She was only a short distance from Tampico when the wreck occurred. Daniels at once sent out the S O S, which was picked up by the operators on several vessels.

Bound from Tampico for New York was the steamship Brabant, on which was Marconi Operator Guy H. Hawkins. When the Brabant was about fifty miles east of Tampico the operator on the steamship Edward L. Doheny called C Q and asked what vessel

had sent out distress signals. He said that some craft had sent out the S O S, but that he did not get the signature. Hawkins then called C Q, asking who had flashed the S O S. Daniels responded to this message by again sending S O S and saying: "The Wakiva is sinking on Tampico Breakwater. Send help." Hawkins replied that the Brabant would arrive at the scene of the accident in about five hours.

The Doheny, the U. S. S. Sacramento and the steamship Energie afterward got into wireless communication with the Wakiva, and the Doheny sent a message to the yacht at ten minutes after nine o'clock to the effect that a boat had been sent to the assistance of those on the wreck. There was a heavy norther blowing, however, and the rough sea which it kicked up prevented the boat from reaching the wreck.

When the Brabant reached the wreck a breeches buoy had been rigged from the foremast of the yacht and anchored to a large concrete rock at the end of the jetty. This enabled all on board to reach shore safely.

73

SOWP

## Research Side Light

BY THE LATE KARL H.W. BAARSLAG

**Re: the TITANIC** (see SPARKS JOURNAL, Vol.4, #4, 1982) I doubt whether or not any actual picture of the radio shack of the TITANIC ever existed. In 1932 or 1933 I spent several hours with Marconi officials in London researching my book "SOS TO THE RESCUE." I specifically asked for a photo of MGY's radio room but they could not find any. I also asked Jack Phillips' sister in Godalming, Surrey, but she did not know of any photos. I interviewed Harold Bride, the survivor, but I now cannot recall if I asked him the same question.

**NORFOLK ISLAND.** (Re: my book "ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE" Farrar, Rinehart, 1940). I am sending a copy to Kirsten Jenkins in the hope that it reaches her before she leaves for Heard Island. Norfolk also has another claim to distinction: it has far more survivors of the Bounty Mutiny than Pitcairn, which today is down to 52. There were 220 when I called at Pitcairn in 1935; the others were evacuated to Norfolk in 1856 (p.266 of "ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE.")

Sixty married couples and 134 young unmarried people and children were transferred to Norfolk Island. Only a handful returned to Pitcairn a few years later while the rest preferred the bountiful and much larger Norfolk to their ancestral home on Pitcairn.

**Re: Lena Michelson.** It stumps me that no one seems to know what happened to her. She and her father reportedly retired to El Cajon where I spent a day in 1945 canvassing the post office, the power company, the gas company and town directories without a single clue. Jim Fitzsimmons, the last manager of WNY, who was sweet on Lena, died a year before I tried to contact him in New York eight or ten years ago. He would have been my last lead as to her whereabouts.

# WIRELESS TO THE RESCUE



Recorded in the 1917 "Year Book of Wireless Telegraphy & Telephony"

Highlights of the First Two Decades - 1899 - 1916

Year Book Donated By Member Victor C. Ulrich - 962-SGP

(Continued from Page 1)

routes of ocean travel and the signals of distress were therefore picked up by a number of other steamers who in their turn started radiating the same message. Thus, the ether surmounting the sea within the whole immediate radius of the accident was pierced by a perfect network of wireless messages all circulated with the object of rescuing the unhappy men in the three other boats. Eventually one of the other vessels sent out a message announcing that she had picked up another boatload. The final two appear to have vanished for ever. There is something very moving about this sweeping of the sea with a wireless net for the purpose of succouring sailors in distress, which seems to fulfil (though in a slightly different sense) the famous prophecy of the Divine Founder of Christianity, "Ye shall become fishers of men."

To return to our list:—think what a number of wonderful dramatic stories are here recorded in a few words! Take, for instance, the entry against January the 23rd, 1908, wherein is briefly recorded the ramming and sinking of s.s. *Republic* by the steamship *Florida* off the Nantucket Lightship. "Aid," we read, "was promptly summoned by wireless and 761 passengers saved." Can we not picture, as we sit comfortably reading by our fireside, the great liner, carrying a number of persons as numerous as the entire population of many a small country town, suddenly transported in a few minutes from a state of assured safety and comfort to one of extreme peril and risk! These anxious passengers on board scan the horizon on yonder bleak January day in search of assistance and see none. What must have been their feelings? In those days the generality of folk were unacquainted with the resources provided by the aerials, stretching like the thin strands of a spider's web above their heads, so that when in answer to a totally invisible and impalpable appeal, rescuing vessels were summoned from distances far out of sight to save the anxious watchers and their loved-ones from imminent death, it must have seemed to many a husband, brother or parent on that ill-fated vessel as though they had returned to the primeval days of direct providential miracles!

We might go on indefinitely, referring to the more dramatic stories enshrined in the columns of our table. It would be easy, for instance, to dwell at length upon such an outstanding instance as the rescue effected in the case of the P. & O. steamer *Delhi*, with her distinguished passengers (amongst whom were numbered Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Fife). This luxurious liner found herself in a most dangerous situation, when on December 13th, 1911, she stranded off the Moroccan Coast; and it was mainly due to the instrumentality of wireless that she escaped without a single fatality. Or we might recall the disaster which befell the *Titanic* on April the 15th, 1912, when all the hundreds on board would almost inevitably have been drowned but for assistance summoned by wireless telegraphy. To deal thus fully with our subject would, however, be to risk wearying our readers, and we choose rather to refer them to the table itself, whose brief dry record will be found to provide ample material for the composition of a complete gallery of mental pictures, not only realistic, but real.

The case of the *Republic*, to which we have referred above, constitutes a typical example of the way in which wireless comes to the rescue in cases of collision at sea; whilst the disaster to the *Titanic* forms an unforgettable instance of the perils of ice, even to the finest marine construction the ingenuity of man can evolve. This latter catastrophe is responsible *inter alia* for an arrangement made between the British and U.S.A. Governments for providing ice-patrol vessels on the North Atlantic steamer route, to give wireless warnings of the presence of icebergs. Since the outbreak of the present war the Government of the U.S.A. has nobly undertaken this service single-handed, and one of the recent reports of the American Government records the fact that their patrol vessel, the s.s. *Seneca*, in June, 1916, encountered a berg, whose pinnacles, when first sighted, towered 200 ft. above the water, whilst the whole mass measured about 400 yards. The *Seneca* "stood by" this gigantic peril to mariners for eight days, radiating wireless warnings all the time. The number of possible disasters thus avoided it is impossible to estimate; but it is worth while to note: first, that their reception demands wireless equipment equally with their radiation; and secondly, that—"prevention being better than cure"—such lists as we are dealing with here are very far from exhausting the record of the achievements at sea performed by radiotelegraphy.

In 1851, during the earlier days of ocean steamship construction and organisation, the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, which for years at that period led the way, sent to sea their Steam Packet *Amazon*, "the last word" in mercantile marine construction of the day. She was a brand new ship, on her maiden voyage, full of passengers and cargo—and totally disappeared leaving "not a wrack behind." Nothing was ever heard of her; but a few charred pieces of wood told the sad tale of total destruction by fire at sea. It was an awful catastrophe, making a deep and enduring impression upon the travelling public. Here is another source of danger, whose peril has been largely eliminated by the equipment of vessels with wireless apparatus. Our list provides many instances wherein aid has been summoned in cases of fire at sea, notably that of the *Voltorno* (10th October, 1913) to whose rescue wireless sped eleven vessels, which succeeded in rescuing from

the flames no less than 521 persons. We may, however, here point our moral with a brief reference to a case which has quite recently come to our notice. When (on 14th September, 1916) the s.s. *Congress*, one of the largest units of the Pacific Steamship Company's fleet, was found to be on fire in the neighbourhood of Coos Bay, Oregon, with the flames making rapid headway and no ship in sight, the 233 passengers and 175 members of the crew who constituted her personnel found themselves in a predicament that might well have cowed the stoutest heart. Captain Cousins, who was in command, ordered the vessel to be headed for the nearest point on the coast, and instructed the wireless operator, Mr. R. H. Brower, to send out the SOS message. As soon as the telegraphist proceeded to the execution of his duty, however, tests showed that the fire had cut off the power of the main set, and the auxiliary equipment had to be used in order to flash the appeal. The Marconi Station at Eureka was the first to answer, although the naval installation at Cape Blanco came in only five minutes later. Ten miles off Coos Bay Bar, when the decks of the *Congress* were scorching, those on board, half choked by smoke, and the vessel plainly in imminent danger of being completely enveloped in flames, everyone, passengers and crew alike, took to the boats. It was indeed fortunate that rescue craft were already on the scene; for hardly had the personnel of the unhappy vessel left her than she flared up like a torch, the flames spreading from stem to stern, as if to impress the occupants of the lifeboats with the awful fate from which they had so narrowly escaped.

A cursory inspection of our list will show that yet another prolific source of danger arises from serious damage to machinery, or from some other constructional accident at sea, which may render the vessel helpless. Such an one happened in the case of the *City of South Haven* (with 100 passengers on board) on June 27th, 1909, when she lost her rudder in a heavy sea, and in that of the s.s. *Camino*, which on October 19th, 1912, dropped her propeller in mid-ocean. Accidents like these, inevitable even with all the care exercised by modern shipowners, sometimes place vessels in a predicament from which nothing but outside assistance is able to save them—and such aid can usually only be secured through the intermediary of wireless telegraphy.

A curious and—up to the present—unique case of rescue through the medium of wireless is recorded on page 717. We refer to the disaster which befell the "Wellman Airship" in mid-Atlantic. It will be remembered that in 1910 an attempt was made by Mr. Wellman to cross, in the airship which he had invented, from the United States to the U.K. His craft became so damaged en route, that death seemed inevitable to the audacious voyagers. She was able, however, to get into wireless touch with the R.M.S.P. *Trent* on her way to the West Indies and New York, ship and aircraft manoeuvred into touch, and all on board the airship were saved. This affair created a great stir at the time amongst the American people, and may be viewed as one of those occasions which foreshadow future eventualities. There can be little doubt that the various developments of aircraft invention brought about by the present war will be followed in peace time by an immense increase in this form of activity. The evolution of types of wireless apparatus suitable for use on the various classes of aerial vessels has immensely increased possibilities in this direction, and stimulated the progress of aviation.

For the most part, the rescues to which we have referred were effected by intercommunication between ship and ship; but shore installations play their part also. Over and over again (as in the case of the s.s. *Monroe* on January 30th, 1914), the distress signals have been picked up by land stations, and the rescue effected through their intermediary. It is on account of such cases as these that countries possessing maritime seaboard are adopting the policy of multiplying the wireless stations situated upon them. Such wireless stations form an invaluable adjunct to the systems of lighthouses and lightships with which man attempts to counteract the blindly destructive forces of Nature.

We have now said enough to illustrate the supreme importance of wireless telegraphy to those who go down to the sea in ships, and for further illustrations of these we would refer readers to the summarised particulars contained in the following pages.



The Year-Book of  
Wireless Telegraphy  
& Telephony · 1917

(Continued Next Page)





# SOS CQD RECORDS

Date.	Name of Vessel.	Nature of Disaster.	Part Played by Wireless.
1916.			
February 4 ..	s.s. <i>Howard</i> ..	Collided with barge off Point Judith	Wireless notified owners of accident
February 7 ..	s.s. <i>Harvard</i> ..	Rammed schooner <i>Excelsior</i> in San Francisco Bay	Wireless brought immediate assistance from shore
February 15 ..	s.s. <i>Paulof</i> ..	Lost propeller and stranded on Tugidak Island, Alaska	Communication established with Naval Radio Station at Dutch Harbour and naval station at Kodiak; s.s. <i>Alameda</i> stood by until vessel was abandoned on reef
February 21 ..	s.s. <i>Middlesex</i> ..	Ashore inside Cross Rip ..	Captain of s.s. <i>Nacooche</i> learned plight by Morse lamp and summoned assistance by wireless
February 24 ..	s.s. <i>Cretan</i> ..	Struck by s.s. <i>Dorothy</i> three miles south-east Wimple Shoal Buoy	SOS answered by several ships. <i>San Jacinto</i> nearest and did most of work. Communication with Marconi Stations at Cape Hatteras and Virginia Beach maintained throughout
February 29 ..	s.s. <i>Multimohah</i> ..	Struck Viti Rock off Lumm Island in heavy fog	Marconi Station at Seattle received call and reported accident
February 24 ..	s.s. <i>Polarine</i> ..	Went ashore on 23rd, near Helsingborg	SOS brought s.s. <i>Pioneer</i> from Copenhagen
March 4 ..	s.s. <i>Apache</i> ..	Machinery disabled forty-five miles south of Cape Henry, and anchored in twenty-five fathoms	SOS brought wrecking-tugs which towed her to port
March 5 ..	s.s. <i>Principe de Asturias</i> ..	Foundered off Ponta Boi, near Santos	SOS brought s.s. <i>Vega</i> , which rescued many of the 1,000 passengers and crew; 338 passengers, 86 crew lost
March 14 ..	s.s. <i>Kanouba</i> ..	Sprang a leak and sank off the coast of South Carolina	s.s. <i>Santa Maria</i> picked up 21 of crew and notified other steamers by wireless to search for other boat, containing seven of crew
March 16 ..	s.s. <i>Zealandia</i> , Fiske Trading Co.	Steering gear disabled 300 miles off Sandy Hook	SOS relayed to Marconi Station at Miami by Standard Oil Co's <i>Richmond</i> , and assistance sent
March 16 ..	s.s. <i>San Onofre</i> ..	Ran short of coal during blizzard off Newfoundland Coast	SOS brought s.s. <i>Ashtabula</i> which towed vessel to Halifax
March 16 ..	s.s. <i>Macoma</i> ..	Ashore Barbuda Island, B.W.I.	Owners notified. Tugs sent
March 16 ..	s.s. <i>Cubanica</i> ..	Sunk by mine or torpedo near Noordhinder Lightship	SOS first picked up at Hook of Holland. Dutch torpedo boat and life-boats rescued all on board
March 21 ..	s.s. <i>Bradford</i> , leaving San Francisco	Accident to rudder ..	Communication established with Marconi San Francisco Station; tugs sent
March 22 ..	s.s. <i>Minneapolis</i> ..	Sunk by submarine in the Mediterranean	SOS brought <i>Leicesterhire</i> and other vessels
March 23 ..	s.s. <i>Svaland</i> ..	Dismasted in lat. 44° N., long. 55° 30' W.	Reported by Swedish s.s. <i>Murjak</i> , and tug demanded
March 23 ..	s.s. <i>Alamo</i> ..	Engine disabled, also broken rudder, 130 miles north-east of Cape Hatteras	SOS brought wrecking tug from Norfolk
March 29 ..	British Cruiser, 59 M	In distress in Irish Sea ..	SOS call received by s.s. <i>Siberia</i> , which radiated general distress call, bringing British Destroyer to his assistance
March 31 ..	s.s. <i>Chiyo Maru</i> ..	Grounded in fog on Lema Islands	SOS brought nine tug-boats and launches, and British torpedo boat destroyer rescuing 299 passengers



"S. O. S."  
 FROM (to Mr. Marconi). "MANY HEARTS BLESS YOU TO-DAY, SIR, THE WORLD'S DEBT TO YOU GROWS FAST."

The illustration here reproduced appeared in 'Punch' on October 22, 1913, just after the 'Volturno' disaster.

Date.	Name of Vessel.	Nature of Disaster.	Part Played by Wireless.
April 2 ..	s.s. <i>Enterprise</i> ..	Broke main shaft and damaged stern	Wireless communication established with steamer <i>Manos</i> 150 miles away. <i>Manos</i> took <i>Enterprise</i> in tow
April 5 ..	s.s. <i>Patria</i> , Fabre Line	In distress in Mediterranean	Radiated call which was answered by s.s. <i>Siberia</i>
April 6 ..	s.s. <i>Zent</i> , Elders and Fyffes	Torpedoed without warning at Fastnet	SOS brought assistance and part of crew saved
April 8 ..	s.s. <i>Madison</i> , Old Dominion Line	Standing by two barges off Long Branch, N.J., flying distress signals, 6.15 p.m.	Five men rescued from barge and transferred to Coastguard Cutter <i>Mohawk</i> , from New York, which completed rescue
April 8 ..	Schooner <i>Emma E. Angell</i>	Lat. 37° 43', long. 75° 08', sunk in collision with steamer <i>Chepstow Castle</i>	<i>Chepstow Castle</i> rescued crew. Accident reported by radio
April 9 ..	s.s. <i>Guajara</i> ..	Badly disabled 301 miles south of Scotland Light	SOS brought s.s. <i>Saxola</i> , which towed liner to Norfolk
April 10 ..	Steamer <i>San Ramon</i>	Pacific Coast; lost propeller at 3.30 a.m.	Wireless through Marconi Station, San Francisco, brought tugs
April 15 ..	Schooner <i>Wm. P. Hood</i>	Reported in distress-fifty-seven miles south-west of Five Fathom Bank Lightship by steamer <i>James-town</i>	SOS brought Revenue Cutter <i>Mohawk</i>
April 15 ..	Schooner <i>Mary F. Morse</i>	In distress off Hatteras ..	s.s. <i>Lenape</i> "standing by" schooner notified Norfolk Station, which sent tugs
April 18 ..	Schooner <i>Millie R. Frank</i>	Seen in distress by s.s. <i>Madison</i> , which wireless call	Coastguard Cutter <i>Mohawk</i> rendered assistance. Crew rescued by Toms River coastguard
May 8 ..	s.s. <i>Philadelphian</i> ..	Collided with Fire Island Lightship	Communicated with Marconi Station at Sea Gate. Revenue Cutter despatched to help
May 9 ..	Fire Island Lightship	Rammed by s.s. <i>Philadelphian</i> in dense fog	SOS responded to by Coastguard cutter <i>Mohawk</i> . Lightship taken in tow by <i>Philadelphian</i> and brought to port
May 9 ..	s.s. <i>Rosnoke</i> , North Pacific S.S. Co.	Foundered and sunk during daylight hours	Steamer <i>Edgar Vance</i> picked up two boats and notified Shore Stations of disaster. Six survivors, 48 lost
May 11 ..	Barge <i>Ivie</i> , New England Coal and Coke Co.	Rammed and sunk in Hampton Road by steamer <i>Berkshire</i>	Owners notified by radio. Crew of barge rescued by steamer
May 14 ..	s.s. <i>Kandahar</i> ..	On fire in Ambrose Channel	Facts reported to agent, who sent fire boat from New York
May 15 ..	s.s. <i>San Giovanni</i> ..	In collision with s.s. <i>Grekland</i> in fog, in Ambrose Channel, near Sandy Hook	<i>San Giovanni</i> established communication with Marconi Station at Sea Gate. Three vessels afforded assistance
May 19 ..	s.s. <i>Catania</i> ..	Went ashore during heavy weather at Aransas, Pass Bar, Texas	SOS answered by Marconi Station at Galveston, which sent tug, which towed her to Aransas Docks
June 14 ..	s.s. <i>Bear</i> , San Francisco and Portland S.S. Co.	Wrecked in dense fog off Cape Mendocino during evening	SOS brought three steamers and tug. Five lives were lost in transfer, while 200 were saved.
June 24 ..	s.s. <i>Fernando Po</i> ..	Stranded near Black Rock Light	SOS brought U.S.S. <i>Pathfinder</i> ; and crew, passengers and mails taken off
September 13 ..	s.s. <i>Antwerpen</i> (Dutch)	Torpedoed and sunk near England	SOS brought assistance to rescue of crew
1916.			
September 14 ..	s.s. <i>Congress</i> , en route San Francisco to Seattle	Fire in hold and beyond control	<i>Congress</i> sent SOS which was picked up by Marconi Station at Eureka, Cal. Communication established with Marconi Station, Marshfield Harbour, and several vessels rushed to assistance. All rescued
September 23 ..	s.s. <i>Bay State</i> ..	Went ashore on rocks off Cape Elizabeth, Maine	SOS established communication with Naval Station at Cape Elizabeth. Revenue Cutter <i>Ossipee</i> proceeded to wreck. Agents notified and sent tugs. All rescued
October 7 ..	s.s. <i>Antilla</i> , Ward Line	On fire off Virginia Capes ..	SOS brought s.s. <i>Somerset</i> , which saved all
October 8 ..	s.s. <i>Stephano</i> , s.s. <i>West Point</i> , and s.s. <i>Christian Knudsen</i>	Torpedoed and sunk by German submarine off Nantucket Lightship	SOS brought U.S. Navy ships <i>Jenkins</i> and <i>Balch</i> , which rescued all

## THE WIRELESS MEN

By Walter Willisson Stephen

Our tidings we breathe to the powers of the dark,  
 and the demons that dwell in the air;  
 And unto the flickering fire of the heavens we  
 answer the lightning's flare.  
 We hark to the voice of a comrade that speaks of  
 the tempest arising afar  
 Where the shimmering line of the sky and the ocean  
 is under the pale North Star.  
 We have seen the white glow of the withering moon  
 aflame on the tropical sea,  
 And the palm tree's tracery under the sky on the  
 beach of the white sand key.  
 The winds of the firmament pause to our bidding,  
 then hasten their missions again;  
 And we know in the night when a brother is near—  
 for we are the wireless men.

We trust to our towers of the tightened steel where  
 the static glimmer clings,  
 While the hurricane drowns through the phosphor-  
 bronze with the lay that the storm god sings.  
 We shatter the peace of a continent's sleep when a  
 colleague calls relief,  
 When the steam is low and the liner's keel is agrind  
 on the wave-wracked reef;  
 And into the murk where the elements mingle and  
 madly the furies shriek,  
 We pilot the sheer Cyclopean prow to the founde-  
 ring goal they seek.  
 And whenever the demons down under the ocean  
 refuse to be denied  
 We can only pray that we meet our God as the  
 wireless men have died.

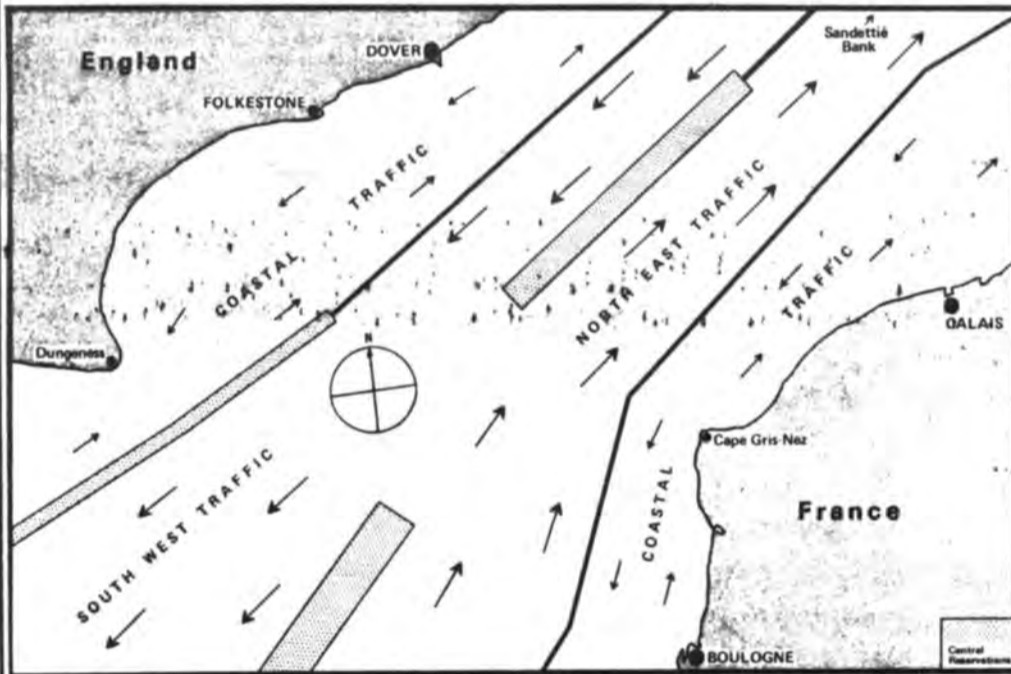
From *Wireless Age* - Feb., 1916

# WIRELESS - THE "KEY" TO ADVENTURE! - READ ON...



## Exploration Of Sunken Mountain

SEATTLE — Cobb Seamount, an extinct volcano which rises almost two miles above the sea bottom to within 106 feet of the surface is currently the object of much public and scientific attention. On Oct. 5 the underwater mountain, which is located in the Pacific, 270 miles off the coast of Washington, was visited by a research expedition under the sponsorship of the Oceanographic Commission of Washington. A vessel of the Coast and Geodetic Survey's Environmental Science Services Administration carried a party of divers and researchers to the site. A second voyage to Cobb Seamount will be made shortly by the Applied Physics Laboratory of the University of Washington to carry out acoustical research.



The English Channel—for shipping one of the world's most treacherous stretches of sea

## WINTER NORTH ATLANTIC

### English Channel Ship Traffic Control

Fifty-four per cent of collisions at sea have taken place in the English Channel — many of them in the Straits of Dover, a stretch of water only 18 miles wide. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the post-war boom in shipping let various authorities to introduce some form of navigational discipline to take the place of the free-for-all operating at that time.

Accordingly, in 1967 a separation scheme was devised by the inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization — an agency of the United Nations — and many responsible ship-owners and masters began to implement their recommendations. Many nations have yet to make compliance mandatory, and much remains to be done in the control of ship traffic. Drawing at left depicts the traffic flow pattern recommended and now generally used.

## The SCIENTIFIC & HISTORICAL RECORD OF THE EARLY DAYS OF WIRELESS



Cape Hatteras Lighthouse marks one of the most dangerous shoals on the Atlantic seaboard

\*\*\*\*\* The "Wireless" - Our Proud Heritage! \*\*\*\*\*

# SPARKS JOURNAL

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- Dedicated to the History of Seagoing Wireless Operators -

Special thanks to the following for these documents:  
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V = Veteran, M = Member, Sparks = Worked at Sea]

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- (SK) Matty Camillo, W2WB, Sparks, SOWP #750-SGP
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